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THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN ART

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ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK, LONDON.

THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY, 1907.

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK.

THE PRACTICAL BASIS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF : an Essay in Reconstruction.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE, 1923.

Price *7s. 6d.*

MODERNISM IN THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

METHUEN & CO., 1926.

THE PRINCIPLES OF GREEK ART.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY, NEW YORK, 1914.

GREEK ART AND ARCHITECTURE : their legacy to us. By PERCY GARDNER and SIR REGINALD BLOMFIELD.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1922.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN ART

BY

PERCY GARDNER, LITT.D., F.B.A.

'I came that they may have life,
and may have it abundantly.'

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PREFACE

THE present work requires little in the way of a preface. It is indeed itself of the nature of a preface or introduction.

The history of Christianity has been one of the great interests of a life mainly devoted to archæology. And since the beginning of the century I have published books on several of its aspects. I have written on Christian origins, Christian doctrine, Christian ethics. But as to Christian art I have published nothing. And it has been represented to me that, as I have been for nearly half a century lecturing on ancient art, it is incumbent on me to formulate views on this side of Christianity also.

I have also published a book on the principles of Greek art. Art does not hold in regard to Christianity so important a position as it does in regard to the religion and the culture of Greece. Many of the best Christians have been quite indifferent to art, as indeed Plato was in regard to Greek art. But Greece was the classic land of art; and the main principles of it are more easily discerned in Greece than elsewhere. The origins and phenomena of art are shown

with great simplicity in what has remained to us of the works of Greek sculpture. It is reasonable to think that the light hence derived may be of service in the wider field of mediæval and modern art, though of course in this field we shall find many developments which are new.

In the course of the book I am constantly recurring to the principles of Greek Art. In some quarters this may raise a prejudice. Readers may think that I am riding a hobby too hard. But it is natural that I should use any light from ancient Greece, any analogies which it may suggest in dealing with modern art. But for my work on the Classics the present book would not have been attempted. In fact, Greece is the fountain head of sane views in regard to art, as Palestine is the fountain head of sane views in ethics and religion. Let those whose studies have taken another direction modify or supplement my views by light coming from other quarters.

A consciousness of my own limitations has made me by no means eager to take up the pen to write this book; and after taking it up, I have often been strongly tempted to lay it down again. My knowledge of modern art is limited: I have always been interested in it; but I do not know thoroughly the galleries and the churches of Europe. Nor am I a practical artist, but only a critic. There is an abundance of histories of art written from the biographic

point of view and dealing with the changing technique of painting and sculpture. With such histories I do not attempt to compete. But in reading the recent literature of art-criticism I have been conscious of a certain hollowness in it, a want of principles, which is in strange contrast to the great confidence with which judgments are expressed. I have therefore tried to discover and set forth some of the general principles which underlie art, and especially the Christian art of Europe. Questions of technique, of optics, of methods are outside my scope. The first part of the volume is psychological, the second part historical; and at the end I make a few tentative suggestions for a reconciliation between modern religion and art. To illustrate such a work at all adequately was impossible: I have therefore excluded illustration. In fact, omissions of all kinds abound.

An index to a work on this plan is almost impossible, and would be of little use. In the place of one, I have drawn up an analysis of contents, which will make reference to my treatment of any part of the subject easy.

In reading my proofs I have become aware of many defects, such as might have been expected in a book written in intervals of leisure, and often thrust aside by professional duties. If I were not an octogenarian, I would try to rewrite it in better form. But I feel

that it is like a watch which keeps indifferent time, but which, if I took it to pieces, I could never get into order again. So it must go for what it is worth, rather as a collection of suggestions than as a finished treatise. *Feci quod potui, faciant meliora sequentes.*

OXFORD,
June, 1928.

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THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN ART

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

I

IT is asserted and allowed on all hands that between Christianity in its various forms and the practice of art, more especially the art of painting, there is a great, perhaps a growing gap. Few artists are keenly interested in religion, and men who are deeply religious have a tendency to despise, or at all events to look away from, art. It is hardly necessary to give proofs of a proposition so generally allowed; but if it be necessary the documents are easily accessible.

The latest official utterance of the English Church on the subject will be found in the Archbishops' Report on the *Teaching Office of the Church* (1919). In a brief appendix to the volume, signed by Dr. E. Lyttelton and Canon Guy Rogers, we find the following assertions: "The gulf which divides the artistic from the

religious world is very wide, and shows no signs of being likely to be spanned." "If a boy shows a marked artistic gift, it is generally taken for granted that he will not be much interested in religion." To the same effect writes Mr. G. B. Atkinson, in a paper published by the Church Crafts Guild, a society especially interested in religious art. "At the present time there is unfortunately an almost entire divorce between the artist and the Church." In the last generation a similar view was put forth by Ruskin, who wrote, "I have never known a man who seemed altogether right and calm in faith, who seriously cared about art."

This estrangement between religion and art is by no means confined to England or the English Church. A very competent Roman Catholic writer in France, M. J. Maritain,[1] complains bitterly of the glacial decrepitude of religious art in France, and cites an interesting passage from M. C. Dulac: "What afflicts me is to see our Mother, the Holy Church, adorned with horrors. All that exhibits her to the world is so ugly, when she within is so beautiful."

M. Maritain attributes this decadence to the prevalence of the "subjective" Kantian philosophy, which like many Roman Catholic writers, he would fain dethrone, and go back to Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen. I cannot at present inquire whether this diagnosis is

[1] *Art et Scolastique*, p. 168.

correct; but if it be, we are not much helped, for the Kantian philosophy and its successors have come to stay. Nor has M. Maritain any useful remedy to propose. He only writes: "If you wish to produce a work of Christian art, be a Christian, and try to produce a beautiful work, putting your heart into it." This is sound enough, but from the point of view of knowledge does not help us much.

In some interesting lectures delivered at Geneva to a Guild of Catholic workers M. Alexandre Cingria [1] takes the same line. He tries to enumerate the causes of the decadence of sacred art, and finds them partly in the moral deterioration of the Christian public, in the spirit of indolence, untruthfulness and want of vitality, and partly in the evil influence of historic movements, Protestantism, Jansenism, the French Revolution, and Gallicanism. A spirit of ennui, he declares, has infected the art of the Church, which copies the weakest products of the Italian decadence, which aims at mere prettiness without any inspiration. Religious art has been specialized and appeals no longer to the people, but to narrow coteries. It suffers from all the defects of academicism and romanticism. On the other hand, no help is to be found in merely copying forms and details of the robust Middle Ages. "Nothing is so dangerous as to adopt the style of a past

[1] *La décadence de l'Art Sacré*, Lausanne, 1917.

age and to set it apart as religious. That is deliberately to drive all life from the churches to make way for a hieratic art without greatness or beauty."

M. Cingria inveighs, in the manner of William Morris, against the wholesale mechanical productions of our factories, a movement which he very unfairly attributes to German influence. He ends on a pessimistic note: "Religious art has scarcely survived the snares of the evil one. A faint breath of life still animates it. Can it be revived?" It is clear that those Anglo-Catholics who look for a revival of art from a nearer approach to Rome are suffering from illusion.

I shall deal but slightly with primitive religion and primitive art. The religion and the art of the great peoples of Asia, China, India, and I may add Egypt, I can but glance at, though of course they must never be wholly absent from one's mind. But the religion with which I am chiefly concerned is the Christian, and the art is the art of European civilization. And not only so; but I fear that it is difficult for an Englishman, certainly for an Englishman of my temperament, to deal sympathetically with the Christianity and the art of the peoples of southern Europe, modern Italy, Spain and Greece. Ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy belong to the world; and their art is at the basis of the art of all civilized peoples. But

since the Renaissance, the art and religion of the north of Europe has turned in a different direction from that of the south of Europe. France has been, in a great measure, the mediator between the two regions, as have Belgium and South Germany. In Chapter X, I consider recent attempts to revive a Christian art in Protestant countries.

II

The arts may be divided into two great groups. In the first group come music and poetry, closely connected together, extremely emotional, and leaving no visible or monumental record, except by the printing press or the gramophone. In the second group are the plastic and graphic arts, architecture, and the fine arts of painting and sculpture, which have no purpose but to interest and satisfy, and which appeal to, or rather through, the eyes.

It is the second of these groups, the arts of architecture, and more especially of painting and sculpture, that I purpose to deal with in the present work, and of the two sides from which these arts may be approached, the side of subject and idea, and the side of technique and practice, I shall concern myself with the former only. The great majority of the books on the history and character of painting treat it on the side of technique. In regard to this I shall say no more than I am obliged, for I do

not pretend to be an authority in regard to it. It is the subjects and the meaning of sculpture and painting that I shall consider, considering these arts as outward and visible manifestations of inner life.

Though both religion and art deeply interest me, I am not a clergyman and I am not an artist. I here approach both religion and art from the side of knowledge, of history and psychology. Can anything be done from this point of view to reconcile the two goddesses, at present standing back to back, each almost ignoring the existence of the other ? We know that in several countries, and at various periods of history, Religion and Art, even Christianity and Art, have been close allies, and each has highly valued the aid which the other could render.

Of course on critical lines it is not possible to set going either a church or a school of art. Both religion and art come from within, from a divine impulse which spurs men into activity, and makes them feel that here lies that which makes life worth living. But yet, from the outward and scientific point of view, something may be done to clarify thought, and to map out possible lines of advance. Right thinking is in its way as important as right feeling or right doing. Whistler thought that the best way to improve art was not to think about it. I can quite understand that anyone deeply

involved in practice whether of religion or of art, might be impatient of discussion. But I agree rather with the dictum of Clutton-Brock.[1]

"We cannot cause men of artistic genius to be born; but we can provide a public, namely ourselves, for the artist, who will encourage him to be an artist, to do his best, not his worst. I believe that the quality of art in any age depends, not on the presence or absence of individuals of genius, but upon the attitude of the public towards art."

I hope to produce what may be called a *Prolegomena* to Christian æsthetics. When in society we introduce one to another two persons whose lives lie far apart, we should know not only their names, but their history and their ideals.

Matthew Arnold has introduced, not only into our discussions, but into the fabric of our thought, the expressions to Hebraize and to Hellenize. As Judaea was the classical land of religion, so Greece was the classical land of art. However perfect our religion may become, we cannot throw aside the prophets and psalmists of Israel as superseded; and quite certainly neither the Founder of Christianity nor the Christian Church would do so; and however perfect our art, we must still go back for rudimentary notions to the artists of Greece.

Starting from Judaea and Greece respectively, civilized religion and art have passed

[1] *Essays on Art:* Preface.

through a long course of evolution, partly owing to the development of human faculties with time, partly owing to the intervention from time to time of men of genius, specially inspired by the Creative Spirit. At some periods of history, and in some countries, they have lived together on good terms. Is there any insurmountable reason why they should not do so again ?

III

Several philosophers have taken up æsthetics as a branch of systematic thought, have tried to determine the relations of the æsthetic faculties of man to the rest of his powers. From the rise of philosophy, with Plato and Aristotle, to its modern developments in Kant and Hegel, Bergson, Croce and Bosanquet, systematic thinkers have perceived that they cannot account for man, cannot give a complete outline of his faculties and tendencies, without treating of the working of those faculties in the field of art. It is rather to fill a gap in their systems that they take account of art than because the subject really attracts them. And it is very seldom that they have either a satisfactory knowledge of the history of art, or an adequate familiarity with the existing works which it has produced. Aristotle, the great system-maker of the ancient world, made a bad start, because he took as his standard poetry and the

drama, a choice natural to a literary man. But poetry, though the greatest of the arts, is not a good type of them, since it does not require any skill of hand, and leaves no permanent or monumental expression. And the Greek tragedy, though a very noble creation, had in it so much that was local and racial that it cannot well be used as a type. Modern writers have been misled by Aristotle into treating the plays of Shakespeare as a standard; and this selection is also unfortunate, because the Elizabethan play also is too highly developed and too peculiar a production to serve as a norm. Of painting and sculpture, arts more primitive in origin and more typical, the philosophers have usually had little knowledge.

The study of the principles of art, whether from the philosophic or the historic side, must be founded upon psychology and anthropology. We have to take our start, not from the great works of art, the most consummate productions of the ages, but from very simple and primitive phenomena. Such investigation will not give us values, will not determine what works of art are the greatest and most important; but it is generally recognized in all researches of the kind that until we have searched out origins we are not in a position thoroughly to understand the later developments.

In æsthetics, as in other departments of human knowledge, there has been in recent

years a strong tendency to take one's start not from abstract ideas or general principles, but from experience, from psychologic, and even physiologic facts. The modern psychologist analyses the phenomena of perception and sensation and tries to define their mutual relations. And in the matter of art and æsthetics he tries to discover why we consider one thing beautiful and another ugly, and hence to derive the character of the beautiful and the ugly.

Psychologic inquiry cannot be regarded as superseding or dispensing with abstract discussions in the field of æsthetics. Of its value we can have no doubt: but analysis can never give us principles of judgment in art. It may help to explain why we admire what we do admire. But it can never prove to us that we ought to admire this or that work of art. As to this more later.

It will certainly tend to clarity if I at once state my view as to the psychologic basis of æsthetics.

I regard life as developed from within, by impulses which arise in the depths of personality, and work outwards on the world of experience, experience both physical and spiritual. From physical contact and experience we derive the materials whence we gain, through the subjective laws of our sensations, perceptions; and through these perceptions we learn to know the material world, the world of space

and matter. From spiritual contact and experience we learn in a parallel way to know other personalities, and the Creative Spirit which is the source of all personalities, the God "in whom we live and move and have our being." The world of nature becomes real to us, because it resists our volitions, and compels us to certain courses of action. The world of spirit becomes real to us, because it on the one hand is the source of our energies, and on the other hand hems us in, and shows us that we are part of a great system of selves or personalities, who have other aims than ours, and limit us in every direction.

Through the resistances which we meet we learn the laws of the worlds of matter and of spirit. Hence we build up our knowledge of these worlds, and through such discipline we discover what ways we must adopt in order to make our volitions effective. But it not only teaches us the nature of our surroundings; it also forms in us will and character. Every living being can only grow and develop through conflict, through disappointment and through energy.

Thus we may account for knowledge and for conduct through the action of the energizing self amid its surroundings. But there is a third element in our lives to be accounted for. We not only act and know, but we also feel. Emotion as well as knowledge arises from the battle of life.

It is through emotion that we pass into the ideal world, the world of truth, goodness and beauty: of the three, truth is the least emotional, and the least ideal. There is a certain matter-of-fact truth, concerned only with sense and matter, which has in it little of emotion and of the ideal. Such is truth in science, whether mathematical, physical or biological. But there is also a higher truth, truth as to God and man which cannot be apprehended without deep emotion. Goodness is in its very nature ideal, and capable of infinite gradation and development. Nor can anyone learn to appreciate and to value goodness without emotion, for goodness is not a fact but a value.

We may speak of the beauty of truth or the beauty of goodness; but such phrases are in a great degree metaphorical. Properly speaking, beauty is a quality recognized in the physical world by a man who contemplates it with emotion and enthusiasm. When we speak of the beauty of nature, of a landscape, or a plant, an animal or a human being, we mean that when they come before our senses we feel a particular sort of pleasant emotion. Whether beauty can reside absolutely in any visible scene or body is a profound and difficult question in metaphysics. We can only recognize it by means of our powers of perception. But when we find that other people also feel the same emotion which we feel in the contem-

plation of a particular scene, we are sure that the feeling is not merely personal or subjective, but has a root in the nature of things, that our emotion is in harmony with the world.

Beauty in art is a reflection of beauty in nature, but a reflection highly idealized and mixed up with intellectual and ethical elements. Of this beauty I treat in the next chapter. Meantime, I must suggest a few definitions.

IV

There are certain terms in constant use in art-criticism, such terms as naturalism and idealism, which I shall have frequently to use. It may be well, thus early in my work, to try to define them exactly. Though in constant use, they are seldom used with precision, and almost always with some bias, either in the way of commendation or reprobation. I shall try to regard them in a dry or scientific light.

The first term is *naturalism* or *realism*. Painting and sculpture have always been held to be, and are in fact, mimetic arts, imitating nature, and providing for the eyes, in a more or less degree, the same appearances which one finds in looking at the natural world. The man in the street, without artistic training, usually takes this view of paintings; if he criticizes, nine times out of ten it is to point out some feature or detail in the painting which he thinks not to agree with actual visual fact.

Some of the great schools of art, notably the Dutch, have carried naturalism in painting to a great length. In our days naturalism has been greatly influenced by the discovery of photography, which in literal and accurate copying of nature surpasses the work of any artist, except as regards colouring; and even in colouring it now sometimes comes near to nature. When carried to extreme, naturalism may seek for illusion: that is, may try so to deceive the eyes of the spectator that he may fancy he is looking, not at a painting, but at a natural object. The most remarkable exhibition of illusionist art known to me is the Wiertz Gallery at Brussels, where every kind of contrivance and *dodge* is utilized to heighten the effect. At the other extreme, if a painter so far neglects natural appearance that the subject of his painting cannot be identified, he steps outside the bounds of the art.

We must not pass over the term impressionism, which has of late become very important in art criticism. It is a particular form of naturalism. The only intelligible meaning which can be given to the word is that the impressionist painter does not study his subject from every point of view, and does not idealize it, but merely throws on to paper or canvas what he has learnt about it from a brief survey and from one point of view. It is often difficult to distinguish an impressionist

drawing or painting from one which is merely superficial or hasty: and in fact until modern times no such distinction was drawn. But now it is seen that a sketch based on hasty observation may have merit of a kind, may bring out some points in the subject which more careful observation would lose.[1]

Naturalism is usually contrasted with idealism; and no doubt through history there are contrasted schools of naturalist and idealist art. But strictly speaking we ought to find the antithesis to naturalism in subjectivism. The artist cannot help putting into his work something of himself, of his own character, and even of his own physical features of eye and hand and of his intellectual tendencies. But when he does this to excess, and especially when he does it consciously, he might be called a subjectivist painter. There are in our day many such painters, artists who try to embody themselves in their art: and indeed the tendency is encouraged in art-schools. The works of subjectivist painters, like the painters themselves, may be of any degree of goodness or badness. The subjectivity of a genius fascinates us; that of a mere pretender disgusts us. It is in small cliques of artists and critics that subjectivism most flourishes: it is probably in most cases a revolt against the naturalism of photography.

[1] See C. Mariott, *Modern Movements in Painting*, 1920.

Idealism is very different, as different from subjectivism as a man of ideas is different from a man of whims and fancies. Ideas, the divine ideas as I should prefer to call them, are the formative and progressive principles of the world, arising in the abysmal depths of personality, and thence working in action and in society.

"By *divine ideas* is here meant those noble and life-giving impulses and tendencies which, by degrees, variously in various ages, become displayed upon the theatre of the world's history, and are worked into the framework of human society. So far as we can see them, they are always working, always becoming; they present themselves in a thousand aspects to a million minds; never can they be wholly grasped or comprehended; we can no more absorb an idea than we can absorb the light of the sun. Our business is to search them out, to accept them, to believe them, to live by them." [1]

Elsewhere I have tried to trace the way in which the ideas of religion work in producing organization and in formulating doctrine. But it is not only in religion that their working may be followed. They dominate also politics, forms of society, morals, all conduct. So far as they can be grasped and formulated by the intellect, we may call them principles; but they can never be definitely enclosed in words. So far as they act upon conduct, we may call them inspirations or impulses.

And painting and sculpture being practical arts, we may well speak of inspiration in them.

[1] *Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 77.

In fact, this is the term naturally applied to all the highest productions of art. Ideal art aims at that which is above it, to which it can gradually approach, without ever attaining it. And that ideal in art is beauty, whether physical or moral. Art can never despise or neglect the appearances of the outer world; but it is not satisfied with them, and tries to go beyond them, by incorporating more of the idea.

The term ideal at once suggests the writings of Plato. Plato speaks of the ideas as the patterns or norms existing in the world of intelligence or spirit, of which all the objects of sense are but blurred and imperfect copies. We may, however, throw the ideas into the past or the future; if into the past, we may regard them as the archetypes after which God planned the world, if into the future, as the ends and objects towards which all living things strive.

The ideal, however, is not revealed only to the individual; it may also inspire a school or dominate a whole period of art. There is a collective idealism as well as an individual idealism. Art has now become with us so individual, that we do not readily recognize this, but despise as merely school work what may be really inspired, though in a lesser degree.

Modern writers on psychology divide mankind into those of extravert and those of introvert tendency. The extravert is the natural healthy man who is in constant contact with that which

is without him, gaining knowledge of fact, forming friendships and affections, carrying out his purposes in society, without exploring or analysing his own feelings. The introvert is the man of subjective temperament, who is always looking within, to see what effects are there produced by events or by persons whom he meets. It is clear that in art the extravert will tend to realism or naturalism, the introvert will rather be concerned with what he himself by quality or character adds to that which comes from without; he will be in art a subjectivist. Both kinds of artist have something to give to the world, the former always, if he is a steady and conscientious worker, the latter, when his own nature is interesting or amusing or instructive. But neither will attain excellence without ideals: ideals which cannot be found directly in the world of nature, nor can they be found by mere introspection; they are the divine element which comes into the life of man from a spiritual source. By following the ideal the extravert artist will show in his work more and more of the inner meaning of the world, its spiritual nature; and by following the ideal the introvert artist will baptize his work into higher and nobler purpose and character.

Naturally this applies more to religious art, to art which aims at spiritual ends, than to art which only tries to amuse, or to satisfy curiosity or passion.

CHAPTER II

BEAUTY IN NATURE AND ART

I

I AM not one of those who hold that, in art, beauty is all in all: that art is to be pursued without regard for ethical considerations. For the idealist there are three ends of endeavour, the pursuit of the true, the beautiful, and the good; and in art none of these can be pursued without reference to the others. We have not in English any word corresponding to the Greek *Kalon*, which expresses the ideal generally, in person, in art, in behaviour: the nearest word is *the ideal*, which does not enter into life and character so easily as the *Kalon* did in Greece.

I must give a brief consideration to the three qualities of truth, goodness, and beauty in art.

Truth is the easiest to define. It consists in the close correspondence of painting or sculpture with that which is represented. The Greeks thought of art as mimetic, as a copy of what is found in nature. That is a perfectly natural

view when criticism is hardly born ; and it is a view still held by some critics of art. And in a certain measure it is valid. All artists must study nature, and art progresses by a closer and more exact study of nature. In Greek sculpture a great advance was made, though not without compensating disadvantages, when the anatomy of the human body began to be studied in the Museum of Alexandria about 300 B.C. A great enlargement of painting was produced in the nineteenth century by a better comprehension of open-air effects and the nature of colour, light and shade. From the time of Alexander the Great onwards, fresh schools of art have constantly arisen which have claimed to abolish the recognized conventions, and to go back to nature for a fresh start. In all these attempts there has been a great deal of illusion, the fresh schools were not so independent as they fancied ; but most of them have succeeded in getting a breath of fresh air from the uplands of nature.

But in nature, as in human life, obvious truth is not the whole of truth, nor indeed its best side. There is a lower and a higher truth.

Though art must take its subjects from nature, and must submit to dictation from nature in many respects, unless it would become unintelligible, yet its constant endeavour and hope is to surpass and transcend nature. Otherwise it has little reason for existing. In mere dead

faithfulness a plaster cast of an object will surpass a sculptured copy of it ; and no painter can copy a scene of nature with the precision of a photograph. In place of what the artist fails to reproduce of material nature, he is bound to introduce something from within, something of the ideal, something of beauty.

As truth is on the intellectual side a guide and regulator of art, so is goodness on the ethical side, the side of conduct. To be worthy and human a work of art must be free from all that tends to demoralize to debase conduct.

I am aware that some art critics would protest against this thesis. Art, they hold, is independent of morality ; it must aim at the beautiful only. No thesis has been more strongly urged upon us than the view that all art which is didactic, which aims at teaching lessons and fortifying morality, is bad art. There is in fact here something of truth, for it must be allowed that a painting, the whole end and object of which is to inculcate some moral precept, is likely to reach a low standard of beauty. Indeed, moral instruction is not properly an object of art, though there is no reason why in the moral teaching of children and the less developed of mankind the art of painting should not be employed. But though morality is not the proper end of art, it is a condition of good art. As truth limits and directs art on the intellectual side, so morality should limit and

direct art on the side of practical life. The artists who despise and reject morality may sink into what the Greeks called pornography, the depiction of the merely sensual. No one will accuse the Greeks of Puritanism ; but they saw clearly that fine artistic talent may be used to encourage what is mean and vile. A painting will show the character of the painter ; and if it exhibit him as sensual and debauched, it cannot be fit to be exhibited in public. As regards subjects also ; there are many which are unfit for treatment or for exhibition.

This almost every one would allow, though of course some people would be more particular than others. The line between decent and indecent may be drawn variously. And it is quite natural that, in the ethical chaos of our times, the line has been less rigidly drawn, and any attempt to make it more rigid will be described as puritanical or smug. According to Aristotelian formulæ, decency is the mean between Puritanism in the one extreme and shamelessness in the other ; and there is necessarily a certain amount of convention in its interpretation. But some sort of decency must be and is everywhere acknowledged. But truth and goodness are but regulative principles in art ; the life and passion of it lie elsewhere.

Beauty is the end or goal to which all the higher impulses in the region of æsthetic tend. Its appreciation does not arise, or does not in

any high degree arise, from intellectual processes; no amount of critical reasoning will establish its character from the objective point of view, valuable as criticism is in its own sphere of comparison and contrasting; but it must be appreciated by an inner warmth or enthusiasm which goes out to meet it and which feels a kinship with it. Just as good deeds are recognized as such by the feeling which arises from the possibility of good in every man, so beautiful things in nature and in art are recognized as beautiful by the faculty which exists in all of us for æsthetic appreciation, a faculty, it is true, which is in many or most people very poorly developed, and which may be almost smothered by unfavourable surroundings.

According to the intellectualist way of thinking, worked out by Thomas Aquinas on the basis of Aristotle, beauty is intellectually discerned just as, according to the same great authority, God is intellectually discovered. Of course, intelligence is necessary for the rational perception of anything. But just as modern theology takes its start, not from abstract propositions about God, but from the data of anthropology and psychology, and the varieties of religious experience, so modern investigation of the nature of art and of beauty must take its start from the active faculties of man, and not from any abstract definition of beauty. This complete change in orientation results

from the general acceptance, more or less completely, of the views of Descartes and Kant. Roman Catholic writers may thunder as they please as to the poisonousness of Kantian subjectivity; but science, whether the science of nature or the science of man, has definitely adopted that attitude, and rejected pre-Kantian dogmatism.

II

What is beauty? A hundred philosophers have tried to define its true nature and essence. The reader may find in the first volume of Mr. Sharp's *Art in the Nineteenth Century* an account of the views of modern writers on the subject, who have differed widely from one another, and have failed to get their views generally accepted. I cannot avoid the subject; but I will treat it as simply and briefly as I can. The simplest definition of beauty is that it embodies the *furtherance of life*. Always, I think, beauty is connected with the development of life. Like goodness, it exists that men may have life, and may have it more abundantly. The growth of life, the penetration of the material by the spiritual, the coming of the Kingdom of God, all these phrases are forms of statement of the end and object of good human life and action. And the cult of the beautiful, ideal art, works towards that end by taking divine things and showing them to men,

by incorporating the divine ideas in visible form.

The desire of beauty and the love of goodness work together in this great human purpose. But they work in different realms, the love of goodness in human conduct, the love of beauty in the realm of art. And beyond this, every separate art has its own sphere, and appeals to one or another of the human senses ; and so to find any definition of beauty which will apply in all arts is impossible, when we pass beyond the generalization above given. But that generalization has value, since if we can find any object of æsthetic gratification which has a tendency to promote and intensify human life in any direction, there will be a strong reason for calling it beautiful. The æsthetic faculties, like all the faculties of man, have been produced or developed in the course of the life of the race ; there is therefore the highest probability that what has in the past tended to the better development of man will do so in the future also. But of course in a varied way. Appreciation of what has in the past been exalting and stimulating may produce slavish copying or favour mere convention. It gives hints rather than directions. We have to find out what in it is really of divine origin, and what belongs merely to the time and the circumstances. One of the greatest sculptors of all time, Michelangelo, was delighted when he

succeeded in producing a statue which could pass as a work of Greek art. But his life shows that such imitation did not really content him ; and in all his greater works he adds to the classical tradition something of Christianity, something of modernity, and something of his personal inspiration.

Some modern writers [1] have held that beauty can be attributed only to human productions, and that it is wrong to speak of beauty in nature. Of course in nature as quite apart from human perception we cannot say that it is beautiful : in fact, we cannot say anything at all. But when we look on nature with some stress of appreciation and affection, we find in it some things which far more than others satisfy and charm the æsthetic side of our nature, but which certainly do not originate with us, but with spirit in nature. The same human faculties recognize beauty in nature and beauty in art.

The question what things are beautiful, and how beauty is embodied in works of art, is a very practical one, but it must also be considered on the side of theory. It admits of three kinds of solution : first a merely negative or agnostic, second an individualistic, and third a social solution.

[1] So M. Paul Gaultier, in his interesting work, *The Meaning of Art*, translated by Baldwin. This writer represents the school of Bergson and Boutroux.

Some modern theorists maintain that in the world of nature everything is equally beautiful, all trees and flowers alike, the sea-anemone and the cuttle fish, the horse and the hippopotamus, the body of a beautiful girl and a decaying corpse. It would consider the great lizards and pachydermatous monsters of a remote geologic age as just as beautiful as the existing races of animals, so that, as regards beauty, the whole course of evolution is meaningless. This view has a certain kinship with that extreme democratic view which is jealous of all superiority, whether in rank, in intellect or in virtue. It is a kind of artistic nihilism, the negation of a cosmos. We need not here discuss it; but it certainly underlies the work of some art schools, especially in France.

I wonder whether any theorist has carried this principle of indifferency into another field, that of taste in eating and drinking, has held that all foods are equally pleasant, and all drinks equally good. No doubt in the taste of the tongue and the palate there are many circumstances which disturb the judgment, keenness of appetite, the desire of the digestible and so forth. But in every healthy man and woman there is a feeling that fine taste in feeding is possible, and that some foods are unquestionably more gratifying than others. We notice this discrimination especially in two kinds of food, fruit and wine, as to which a refined

palate is very sensitive. One man differs from another in his preferences, but still there is a general consensus of opinion among the cultivated as to which fruits and which wines are the finest and most attractive, which consensus regulates their prices. And if ideality, the love of the beautiful and dislike of the harsh, prevails in the judgments of the least developed and least intellectual of our senses, how much more natural it is in regard to the finely intellectual senses of hearing and sight.

There is more vitality and more danger in another modern view, that of the extreme individualists.

In some quarters excessive individualism, leading to the denial of all principle, is raised almost to the level of an axiom; and it is accepted by some artists, who think that their highest object in the exercise of their profession is to express themselves, to show in their works their own personal feelings and talents. Such a tendency is natural in a society almost insanely individualist like ours. And one may fairly grant that a certain amount of personality and individualism lends a charm to works of art. But self-expression should not be conscious and deliberate but unconscious. An artist who aims at what is good outside himself is sure to show a certain degree of individuality, and of a good type. The artist who is self-conscious and who thinks that "because I am I" he may follow

any bent which commends itself to him, will reach not beauty and charm but eccentricity, combined perhaps with a passing ephemeral notoriety. It is not thus that great artists of the past attained to lasting fame. They worked usually rather as members of a school than as individuals. They did not aim at being striking and original, but their originality came through unintentionally. We recognize their hands by a charming touch here and there rather than by pretentious singularity.

Of course we must not try to fence in the path of genius. Artists of great force and originality must take their own way, and we look on with wonder and delight. But I speak of more ordinary persons. It is a great danger for any man to consider himself a genius, and to despise others. If the real call has come to him, he will know it. But a person who is a genius only to himself and to a handful of eccentrics is not a pleasing object.

An ugly nature will not by self-expression produce anything beautiful. Just as an evil man, out of the evil treasury of his heart, will bring forth that which is evil, so a perverted or eccentric artist can never produce what will permanently please. Moreover it is now recognized in psychology that there is much more in a man than his expressed personality. There is the unconscious element in him, which is often more important, which is better or worse, than

the conscious. And that element includes a number of tendencies which only in part work through into his personality, ancestral bias, national enthusiasm, the influence of those around him. A personality is a greatly compounded thing ; and a person may develop and exhibit in his art what is better or what is worse in it, he may ever strive after high ideals, or he may express nothing but indolence and conceit.

Mill's " because I am I " is always something to be guarded against, a selfish yearning which may easily lead a man to perdition. It is not what I am, but what I may become, the ideal or divine element in me, which is worth full expression. And not merely what is best in me personally, but what is best in my inherited tendencies, my family, my race, my school of art which has to find expression if I aspire to rise above the merely personal and subjective to what is objective, what is suited to nature and to the will of God revealed in the world and in personalities and in society.

This brings us to the consideration of the process called sublimation, which is to all the range of the higher life of men of infinite importance.

There is a school of psychology, associated with the names of Freud and Jung, and very influential in these anarchic days, which holds that the inhibition of natural impulses is a

main source of human vice and unhappiness. Inhibition they say weakens all the active powers of man, especially the instinctive tendencies which lie beneath consciousness, whereas indulging of vital impulse produces happiness and health. They do not sufficiently realize that it is through the curbing and civilizing of instinctive tendency, and through that alone, that the individual can be subordinated to society, and the nobler tendencies which build up society can be formed and strengthened.

The impulse of self-expansion can be so directed into less obvious channels, that a man may care most not for his lower but for his higher self, and so far subordinate his will to the divine will that he may rejoice in self-surrender, in taking his part in the nobler activities of the race, in preferring things invisible to the things that can be seen, in striving after not that which is obvious but the ideal, in taking the part of the spirit in its conflict with the flesh.

The same thing is true of sexual tendency. If it be unduly indulged, a man is wrecked. If it is merely inhibited through prudence or convention, he is stunted. But if it is moralized and spiritualized, it becomes a great power to lead him to a nobler life. Usually it will pass from mere self-gratification to marital affection and respect. If marriage be impossible, it will

expend itself in parallel directions, towards the love of sisters and friends, or a keen desire to help forward the young. Indeed, it is more than probable that all forms of love to man and love to God arise from the sublimation of sexual desire. Paradoxical as it may seem, even the entire suppression of desire in the monastery and in the convent is at bottom based upon the sexual instinct. The clearest proof that this paradox of the higher life is really a scientific truth may be found in the tendency of women who have become saints to speak of love to God or love to Christ in the very language of sexual desire. There may be, there often is, something abnormal and unhealthy in these utterances; but as it is often possible by the study of unhealthy subjects to discover important facts of pathology, so it is instructive to probe even unpleasing utterances of the love of the cloister in order to throw light on the phenomena of sublimation.

Naturally I have not here to go further into the question of the sublimation of natural instincts in social life, or the life of religion. But we are bound to consider the parallel phenomena of the sublimation of the productive joy of life in the realm of art. To this subject I will return in future chapters.

A great many people, not given to reflection, would say that the guide to beauty, as the guide to right action, is just common sense. There

are few terms more abusively used than the term "common sense." If by it is meant merely conforming to ordinary standards and custom, it may in many cases be sensible to practise it. But if it implies that any man has by mere introspection a leading towards what is right and best, it is altogether misleading. No man who has had a scientific training in any branch of mechanics or engineering, for instance, would allow that untrained common sense is a sufficient guide to doing the right thing. Without a certain basis of ordinary good sense, no training would be effective. But if a man have that saving quality, training will be of unmeasured value to him; and it is from training, and not from mere inspection, that he will learn what means to take towards any purpose set before him in his profession.

It is the same in the case of art. As regards technique, it is obvious that only training and careful practice will produce excellence in it, though one man may respond to training far more readily than another. But principle as well as training is necessary before anyone can judge of what is beautiful and what ugly in art.

III

The third kind of view is idealist as opposed to nihilist, and social rather than individual. It holds that, although every one has a sense of

beauty either latent or developed, yet education is necessary to its due development. And such education must come through the society of which the individual is a part. If ideal beauty be the final aim of art, yet partial views of beauty belong to various societies, and various branches of the human race. To each it is given to incorporate in its works some side or aspect of beauty in art. This view is worked out with ability and insight in Mr. March Phillipps' *Works of Man*. The Greek artists incorporated in their temples and their sculpture beauty as it appears to sense and intellect, the Greeks being the élite of mankind in the matters of visual perception and intellectual appreciation. The Gothic builders took another side of beauty as their end, producing lofty and aspiring cathedrals in which the complicated strain of stone against stone was an embodiment of the restless energy of the race, as well, it should be added, as of the religious aspirations of clergy and monks. At the Renaissance the Greek spirit revived, and ever since has struggled with the Gothic in our religious buildings. Even the artificial court life of the seventeenth century and the solidity and respectability of the Victorian age find a reflection in the furniture of the two periods. In the same way Saracenic and Chinese buildings show clearly the national traits of the peoples who erected them.

This close relation between the art of all races and communities and the character of those communities is amply shown in history. But though art be thus swayed by national conditions, it yet in all countries embodies ideas. Certainly the architecture and art of the Teutonic races would have been very different from what it was if those races had not embraced Christianity. When the people of France went over from Gothic to Classic architecture, it did not show any change of race, but only of thought and feeling. And since in modern times nations are brought by intercourse far closer together, and mental and spiritual influences pass much more freely from one to another, the racial element in art and architecture tends to diminish, and what may be called the cultural element grows. Especially, since our subject is in the main religious art, and now in all European countries various forms of religion exist side by side, the broad lines of distinction, Classic and Gothic, Catholic and Protestant, become much fainter. There must always, in the art of every country, be some element of nationality. But much more conspicuous is the influence of religion, the influence of science, the influence of social conditions; to which we must add the influence of commerce and of fashion. And all these influences work largely through education.

It is the end of all education worthy of the

name, whether the teaching of children, or the guiding of adults, or self-discipline, to impart good and reasonable views as to what is true and what is false, what is virtuous and what is vicious, what is beautiful and what is ugly. And education includes, or should include, all the three parts of man. The intelligence should be informed as to what is better and what is worse, the emotions trained to like the better and dislike the worse, the will trained to pursue the better and avoid the worse. All this is somewhat dry and abstract ; but in the modern world of thought anarchy is so rampant that it is often desirable to state explicitly what in times of order would be assumed without statement.

The impulse towards some kind of artistic expression, and the delight in such expression when found, is to a great degree sub-conscious or instinctive, and is shared by men and animals. But man is not merely an animal ; he is also a conscious being. The tendency towards the beautiful which is shown by living creatures in sea and on land is capable of a vast expansion and refinement by human means. But man has, in order to develop it, to work, to take trouble, to deny himself and to educate himself. And he is capable of extreme perversion in the matter. He may turn away from, and become callous to, beauty in every form, like the ascetic. Or he may acquire false and

degraded notions of what is desirable as beauty ; he may prefer what is in the nature of the case ugly and detestable.

In schools, even in primary schools, it has of late become more usual to place before the pupils beautiful things, whether works of nature or works of art. The surroundings of schools, including the walls of schoolrooms, are thus made more pleasant, and the minds of pupils are directed towards appreciation of what is delightful. Also the examination of natural objects which is usual in children's classes must needs familiarize young minds with what is orderly and beautiful, since beauty and order run through nature in all its forms. A person, old or young, who is in constant contact with nature in its more pleasing aspects, whether in the country or in museums, will seldom fall into a base or perverted way of regarding works of art.

However, much more than this is necessary. To form a sense of beauty in art it is necessary not only closely to examine the works of nature, but also to become familiar with some of the best human works of past times. By common consent some countries in some ages have carried beauty in art to a high point, especially ancient Greece, and Renaissance Italy, France and Germany. These developments have become classical ; that is, they have reached the highest point hitherto attained by man in

certain fields of art. An acquaintance with the great artists and the best works of such classical periods is as necessary for a balanced and reasonable appreciation of art as a knowledge of the best that has been written in past days is a condition of the acquisition of literary taste, or an acquaintance with noble deeds of the past is a condition of right judgment in matters of conduct.

IV

Although beauty is the ultimate goal in all the arts, yet beauty in some of them is so far apart from beauty in others, that a general formula which will include all beauty in art is necessarily so broad and vague that it will not in practice be of much use. The artistic temper is no doubt one, and it may lead to excellence in any art. But to lay down principles applicable to all is hardly possible. Without idealism, or a direct striving after beauty, there can be no high artistic excellence. And for the production of what is beautiful a certain amount of imagination, a power of reaching out beyond the obvious, is necessary. It may also be conceded that a few general features are common to all great works of art.

Beauty certainly involves form : and without good form it either cannot exist, or at all events is merely chaotic. Aristotle perceived this and introduced the words symmetry and rhythm as

characteristics of all good art. Properly symmetry is the proportion of part to part ; rhythm the character of orderly movement. These words, or one of them, can be applied alike to a Gothic cathedral, a great poem, a sonata by a master, a painting or a statue. But they are rather guiding lines than inherent qualities. If a cathedral or a poem is so symmetrical as to be monotonous, it at once ceases to interest us. Symmetry may be a condition of the finest and most durable works of art, but it is the life and character which inform those works which make us love them, just as perfectly regular features in a face may enhance its beauty, but a regular face may be " faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null." So again simplicity in a certain degree is necessary to great art. But extreme simplicity is perilously near to silliness, as every reader of Wordsworth discovers. Such general statements do not much help us, until we apply them in some particular branch of art, when no doubt they are valuable.

It might seem a not hopeless task to define the nature of beauty in a single art, or a single group of arts. Can we define the nature of beauty in painting and sculpture ? Many writers have tried to do so : but they have greatly differed among themselves, and have not reached generally accepted results. But a few distinctions are obvious. In painting, beauty is embodied in two ways, by form and by colour,

in sculpture by form only. This dictinction must not be pressed too far, as sculpture has in many ages been coloured. In Greek sculpture, and especially in bas-reliefs, colour was usually employed. So it was generally in mediæval sculpture. And in various modern schools attempts have been made to revive the custom. It may be mainly because the colouring of statues tends to disappear while the forms survive, that we dissociate so completely sculpture and colour. Or it may be because sculpture in the noblest of all materials, bronze, hardly admits of colour. In any case we may fairly say that colour is of quite subordinate importance in sculpture.

With painting it is quite otherwise: there colour is all-important. Colour is so steeped in subjectivity that it is hardly possible to say definitely which colours are the most beautiful. It is a matter as to which, not only individuals, but even different countries and successive generations hold the most diverse views. We need not go far for an example. Half a century ago, as many of us remember, soft colours and half-tints in dress and furniture were regarded by the majority of cultivated people as art-colours. At present there seems to be a preference for vivid colours and startling contrasts. It does not do to be dogmatic in such a matter. Many of the younger generation will regard the former of the two tendencies of which

I am speaking as Victorian or smug. Many of the older generation will see in the latter of the two tendencies nothing but vulgarity, or revolt against good taste.

No doubt the question of colouring can be attacked from the side of science. The rainbow and the prism, which separate into their elements the rays of light, have shown us which are the primary colours and which the secondary ; and we have discovered that some colours are complementary to others. To the technique of art the knowledge thus gained is of the highest value ; but from the point of view of idealism it is hardly relevant, as it does not help us to determine what is the nature of beauty in colour.

Form has in it much more of the intellectual element than colour. Accordingly in the arts which deal primarily with form, in architecture and sculpture, it may be possible to find certain qualities which belong to all good art. Ruskin wrote a very able and stimulating work on the *lamps of architecture.*

Ruskin in our day has many admirers, but few followers : indeed, his impulsive and rhetorical style of writing constantly leads him into inconsistencies ; and it would puzzle a devoted follower to draw up any consistent theory out of his multitudinous works.[1] In speaking of

[1] Mr. W. G. Collingwood has attempted this in his *Art-teaching of John Ruskin.*

the simplest and most logical of all national developments of art, that of the Greeks, I have tried to point out certain qualities in which its beauty consisted.[1] I mentioned eight qualities : (1) Humanism, (2) Simplicity, (3) Balance and Measure, (4) Naturalism, (5) Idealism, (6) Patience, (7) Joy, (8) Fellowship.

(1) *Humanism* is the anthropocentric tendency in art, the tendency to place men in the clearest light, and to regard physical nature as subordinate to man, and to be interpreted through man. This is the predominant characteristic of Greek art, and of the art of the Renaissance which carries on the torch. I will return to the subject in a future chapter.

(2) *Simplicity* is always charming : in men and women there is no trait which more strongly attracts a healthy taste, and there is no trait in a work of art which more fully establishes a claim to a permanent place in the world. But it was easy for the Greeks to be simple in art, because their life was very free from complexity, and they came first in history. It fell to them to start art upon its career in the civilized world. In modern times, alas ! nothing is more difficult than to be simple, and yet have charm. A grown-up man cannot, save in rare cases, have the simplicity of childhood ; and we realize from the use of the word *simple* in English how

[1] *Greek Art and Architecture*, Oxford University Press, 1922.

close simplicity may come to want of intelligence. In our complicated and feverish modern society, however much we may admire candour and the absence of self-consciousness, we find those traits very hard to attain.

(3) *Balance and Measure* are, as I have already pointed out, of the essence of beauty in all the arts ; and in architecture, sculpture and painting they are essential. No building can altogether lack them, nor can indeed the implements and utensils of daily life. In painting they are less essential, and indeed when present in excess in painting they make it seem hard and formal. Yet, on the other hand, if wholly without them, painting has a strong tendency to drift towards anarchy. They represent the reasonable element in art, as colour represents feeling and passion.

(4) *Naturalism* is a quality without which both sculpture and painting readily drift into absurdity. They must necessarily be mimetic ; and though they cannot be content with mere representation of nature, yet they must show in marble or on canvas forms which can be recognized. Even a painfully minute and accurate copy of so simple an object as a flower or a shell has value, though of course not the highest value. An art which despises nature and fact is essentially a lawless and godless art ; and in the long run the world may be trusted always to realize this.

(5) But all the qualities I have mentioned are rather negative than positive; they give us guiding lines rather than principles of life and progress. An artist who adhered to them rigidly might very likely incur the reproach "Yet lackest thou one thing." The one essential of art is *Ideality*, that search for the beautiful in nature and man which is parallel to the search for truth by the intellect, or the search for goodness by the will. It is beauty of which the true artist dreams, and to which he devotes his working powers.

(7 and 8) *Joy and Fellowship.* Of course in all ages there are ideals good and bad, and the higher ideals may be approached from many sides and by infinite gradations. And the further a society is from nature, the more complex its arrangements, the greater is the danger that the artist may follow false lights, and lose his way in a marsh. The other qualities which I have mentioned above as characteristic of Greek Art, joy and fellowship, do in a measure constitute tests of ideals. To be worthy an ideal must produce in the artist a feeling of *joy* in proportion as he realizes it, joy of any degree of strength and of height, but yet joy of some kind. And still more important is it that the idea should not be a mere personal idiosyncrasy, but pursued in *fellowship*, an ideal which a country or a church, or at all events a society or a school, recognizes as good. Otherwise an

artist becomes a mere *crank*, and a solitary wanderer in darkness.

Though the conditions of good art may be set forth, its real soul and essence constantly eludes us and refuses to be confined in any formula.

I think that the *lamps of Greek Art* are in fact the lamps of all art, though probably in a less degree prominent in the art of countries like China, Japan and India, which stand apart from European culture. In modern European art, however, there are many fresh elements, some from Christianity, some from the Nordic peoples, some from the East, which make it difficult or impossible to set out succinctly their main principles; certainly impossible to me, who have not devoted a lifetime to its study, and have had no training in practical art-work. I had best therefore stop at this point, hoping that as this book proceeds I may be able to find my way a little further in this difficult field, full of cross-lights and of pitfalls.

V

In the world there is never a really good thing but an evil thing simulates it, and tries to pass in its place. There can be no doubt what is the false thing which simulates beauty in art. It is fashion. Fashion bears the same relation to beauty which magic bears to religion, the plausible to the true, respectability to real good-

ness. It puts the unreasoned caprice and fancy of the social world in the place of æsthetic principle. It is a false goddess, who tries to draw away the votaries of beauty. In later Greece, when the worship of the gods had declined, there arose a cultus of the goddess Tyche or Luck, who absorbed to herself the worship of all classes; and to her shrines men brought their offerings. Equally absorbing is in the modern world the worship of fashion. If any ordinary woman considers how much of her time she spends in Christian worship, and how much in the pursuit of fashion in some field or other, she will see that there is a modern parallel to the Greek worship of Good Luck.

When fashion is mentioned, we naturally think first of fashion in dress, which has greatly exercised the minds of men and women since the Middle Ages. The Greeks had a very simple kind of attire for both sexes, which was, with slight varieties, in use all through their history: and so had the Romans down to the age of Constantine. But when Europe began to revive after the barbarian invasions, fashion intruded in male and female dress, and passed through an extraordinary series of phases; it can hardly be called an evolution, since no law of succession is traceable. But every one may judge, from the tombs in our churches, to what strange extremes it ran. Since the eighteenth century, the dress of men has become

simpler and simpler, though it cannot be said to have moved in the direction either of beauty or of appropriateness. Indeed, fashion in the dress of man has reached what may be called a *reductio ad absurdum*. Now it is not the general arrangement of the male dress which follows the fashion; that is very various and subject to individual caprice. Only soldiers and sailors, and in a less degree the clergy and academic circles, maintain a special and characteristic dress. But trifling variations, the line of one's trousers, the cut of one's collars, have assumed a most absurd prominence: men who want to be *smart* attach to trifles such as these an importance which is quite ridiculous. And the modern fashion of cutting the hair very short and doing away altogether with the beard, which is a characteristic, and often a very striking characteristic, of a beautiful male head, has done much to put all men on one level of commonplace.

The dress of women also has become simpler: especially in the last decades it has become far less elaborate. Some of the fashions of the last century—the tight stays, the crinoline, the chignon—seem to us little less than barbarous. But perhaps some features of the present dress, especially the preference of straight lines in arrangement, may be as far from natural beauty as even the crinoline. More obviously contrary to nature and to beauty is the custom of doing

away with the long hair, which has been the theme of poets since poetry began, and which may be so treated as greatly to enhance the beauty of a woman, especially if the hair be fair. I sometimes fancy that the next move of fashion may be to shave the head entirely, and to wear a wig, perhaps of green or purple colour.

But it is not so much fashions in dress which concern us here, but the spread of fashion from dress into wider spheres. Our houses, our amusements, our habits, are more under the sway of fashion than they ever were. Conventions spring up, one knows not how; and the man or woman who dares to disregard them is looked upon as a pariah. We have confined ourselves with a system of social observances tighter than any stays; and as long as we are thus confined, the search for beauty in any field of observation will be frustrated; the love of fashion will be drawn like a red herring across the trail.

But what is of especial importance in this place is the fact that fashion has grown more and more urgent in the field of æsthetic appreciation. The way in which the prices of pictures fluctuate at sales up and down cannot be regulated by any regular principle, but depends upon fashion, the verdict of some coterie who happen to have influence with amateurs. It is not merit which can be demonstrated which determines prices, nor the reasoned views of the great specialists, but some unseen

power which pervades men's minds. It is a triumph of fashion over taste and reason. It is a negation of all principle. It is, in fact, anarchy.

CHAPTER III

JOY OF LIFE, ASCETICISM, MYSTICISM AND PURITANISM

I

THE activist view of life, and the thesis that life develops from within, are best justified when we consider the times when energy is greatest and vitality most overflowing. Such times are the Spring in nature, and the time of adolescence in men and women. The poets, who often have a deeper insight than philosophers, have made of these times their chief themes, and adorned then with rich beauties of thought and imagination. The time at which the impulse of sex becomes fully developed varies from climate to climate and from race to race. Among Southern races it is developed earlier than among the more stolid and self-contained peoples of the North. In the last century, and especially in recent years, it has come later in England, both with men and women. We may fairly consider that with men the climax commonly comes between twenty and twenty-five, or even later. With women it is no doubt somewhat earlier.

The combination of youth and Spring sets free the powers which dwell below consciousness in all living things. What the Phrygians regarded as an inspiration of the Great Mother, and the Greeks as a Dionysiac enthusiasm, urges men and women as well as animals to the fulfilment of the law of their being, and at the same time carries them outside their normal existence in the desire of beauty.

No doubt in thronged and sophisticated modern societies the simplicity and clearness of such phenomena disappears; they often have no chance of development amid the pressure of work and the deadness of routine. A great proportion of the people are stunted and never attain to a complete development. But the great stream of tendency of which I have spoken is natural and normal.

At the same time of life in which arises the urgency of life, out of which sexual feeling and the appreciation of beauty spring, another stirring of the nature often takes place. It is not indeed confined to any time of life: but the natural time is when childhood is exchanged for young maturity. The direction of this stirring varies greatly with circumstances and conditions. In a recent work I cited as good examples of this inner change two notable positivists, John Stuart Mill and Frederic Harrison. But in a country like ours, where children of the more leisured classes are usually,

or at all events have up to now been usually, brought up in some denomination of Christianity, the change takes a visible form. Among Protestant nonconformists young men and women join the Church. In the English Church the rite of confirmation would naturally mark the development; but unfortunately this has in many places been placed too early in life and has become a somewhat perfunctory ceremony. Transformations of a cruder and more abrupt character may be observed in the meetings held by Revivalist preachers or the Salvation Army. American writers have found the most striking feature of religion in what are called conversions.

They have shown that, in the case of both men and women, as they pass beyond childhood and reach adolescence, there usually comes a time of crisis, when the character and personality rather suddenly develop and become fully conscious. The result may be a sense of imperfection and sin in oneself, and the realization of the ever-present spiritual Power which can do away with sin and inspire with a deeper life. In countries full of religious unrest, such as America, these phenomena often take a startling turn. They are violent, and sometimes evanescent. Amid more settled conditions, in members of the Roman and Anglican Churches, the change of spirit is more gradual; but even then a crisis is often apparent, and

the rudder of life is definitely set in one direction or another.

Among barbarous peoples, such as Red Indians and Australian natives, the time of adolescence is regarded as crucial; and initiations, often of a severe and painful kind, have to be undergone by the men before they can take their due place in relation to the deities of the tribe, or take part in government. So in all the tribal cults of the ancient world, religious ceremonies marked the coming of age of young citizens, when they formally took up their duties to the gods, the city and the family. Christianity, in this as in many other matters, took over pagan ways and inspired them with a new meaning and a higher purpose.

While Christianity was struggling, and winning its adherents from pagan societies, the change of religion was marked by the rite of baptism. But as the Christians became a definite section of society, baptism was gradually transferred to infancy, and no longer marked a transfer of allegiance.

Although the impulse to enjoy life, and the sense of the insufficiency of it, arise from the same expansion of the powers, usually even at the same time of life, yet there is no close connection, and there may well be collisions, between them. The sexual impulse in unregulated extreme will lead away from orderly life towards debauchery; the religious impulse in

unregulated extreme will lead away from normal existence, according to a man's predisposition, either towards Puritanism or towards the cloister. Hence through the whole course of history the artist, the moralist and the ascetic have found it hard to come to terms, and continual clashings have taken place between them.

The joy of life is essentially optimist. It finds life good, and tends to explore that good in every direction. What may be called by the general term asceticism is essentially pessimist, and profoundly distrusts the impulses of nature as tending to evil. Optimism is well expressed in the beautiful line of Spenser, "A dram of sweet is worth a pound of sour." It was fully developed among the Greeks, whose whole early literature and art is full of it. Asceticism found its great classical expression in the life of Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, whose whole teaching rests on a disbelief in human happiness and a resolve to mortify the flesh. In fact, the asceticism of some of the Buddhist fanatics has exceeded that of all the Christian monks and hermits. It has reached the climax in the death-in-life of some of the recluses of Central Asia, who have caused themselves to be walled into a cave, with but a tiny opening, through which could be handed in to them day by day the least modicum of food and drink which would support life; and

who have in darkness and filth and utter solitude passed many years until they were released by death.

Whether it was from Buddhism or from other sources, a great wave of asceticism passed over the Western world in the age before Christianity, and profoundly influenced the rising faith, especially in Egypt, whence it spread to other countries. The Buddhist ascetic hoped by self-mortification to escape from human desire and striving and so to avoid the penalty of re-birth into the world; the Christian ascetic to attain to such merit as would ensure his admission to heaven.

Mysticism is not the same as asceticism, although the two belong to the same temperament, and the motive of the Christian ascetic is often the desire to attain the mystic state. That state consists in a direct consciousness of God in experience, and a conviction of the possibility of communion with God. It results in a number of vague and undefined experiences, scarcely to be remembered, hard to understand, in which the mystic is convinced that he has come near to absolute being and escaped from self-consciousness into a wider life. Among the votaries of all religions there are mystics, but especially among the sages of India and the saints of the Christian Church.

A particular variety of asceticism is Puritanism, which resembles the mystic religions of

Paganism in teaching the depravity of human nature and the worthlessness of the beauty of the world, but differs from them, and infinitely improves upon them, by inculcating a severe code of morality. It teaches not so much self-denial as self-discipline. Hence it has taken a far nobler part in history. It originated with, or at least was developed by, the Jews. And they, as is well known, forbade the representation in art of all living things, and especially of the most beautiful of them, the human body. That veto was adopted from the Jews by Mohammed, and his strict followers still adhere to the prohibition, so that they conscientiously destroy works of fine Greek art discovered in the countries which they dominate.

The crossings and clashings between the desire of enjoyments, and the conviction that after all they are not satisfying, that they are not the highest good, mark the course of the history of society, and of all individuals who are of a higher type. Both impulses are based upon experience and reality: in both there are better and worse elements: both may lead to unhealthy results. In the last century, in Western Europe and America, the even course of life, the enormous increase of the means of enjoyment, tended to put asceticism out of court. But now a tremendous reaction is beginning to set in. The universal horrors of the Great War; the frightful condition into

which Russia has fallen ; the excessive growth of the spirit of nationality ; also the abuse of wealth and the rebellion of poverty throughout Europe and America, have caused in all who reflect, all who have leisure to consider what is taking place, a certain degree of pessimism. It can hardly be doubted that asceticism will revive.

II

The present treatise is not an examination of human psychology, but an inquiry how the fundamental human impulses act in religious art. It has therefore been necessary merely to define and map out the ground, avoiding all consideration of details. What we have next to consider is how the clashing tendencies of human nature act in the field of art.

Examples of artistic beauty arising from a subconscious urgency of life abound in the vegetable and animal world. Of the beauty of flower and tree I need not speak. Perhaps even more expressive is the beauty of form to be found in many of the shells formed by molluscs, creatures of very humble rank, and scarcely endowed with what we should regard as intelligence ; shells often reminding us of great works of architecture in their complication and beauty of form. At a higher level we have the nests of bower-birds, and even of the modest hedge-sparrow, which are of admirable con-

struction. Bees and wasps and ants construct most elaborate dwellings, often of the most perfect form and finish.[1]

The same urgency of life, often issuing in artistic expression, affects man also. When the hero of Tennyson's *Maud* is conscious of the rise within him of an overpowering passion of love, he exclaims:

> "It seems that I am happy, that for me
> A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
> A purer sapphire melts into the sea."

Even the physical senses gain more keenness and the sense of beauty in nature and in mankind is born or is stimulated. These are tendencies which seek expression in art.

Mystic religion seeks and has found, in many countries, some artistic expression in music and poetry. In its harsher and more ascetic forms even these expressions are rejected as worldly. But in its gentler and more humane forms it has succeeded, probably for the few rather than the many, in embodying in these arts spiritual aspiration. Even the Puritan Milton found spiritual satisfaction in such music of a great church "as may with sweetness through mine ear, Dissolve me into ecstasies, and bring all Heaven before mine eyes." And poetry, the most universal and adaptable of all

[1] On this subject Professor J. Arthur Thomson has a good chapter, headed "Before the Dawn of Art" in his *Secrets of Animal Life.*

arts, may express pessimism, aspiration or spiritual rapture in a high degree. But the graphic and plastic arts are less adapted for this kind of expression.

There is no direct connection, there is even fundamental opposition, between idealism in graphic and mimetic art and mysticism. Idealism tries to discover and develop the hidden beauty of nature; it loves nature as a man may love a woman, causing him to see in her many charms which are to others invisible. The artist tries to enter into the purposes and impulses of nature and to give them a form better than nature can succeed in giving them amid all the disturbing influences of material forces and tendencies. Mysticism, on the other hand, usually turns away from beauty in nature, considering it as on an infinitely lower level than the things of the intellect and the spirit. Instead of trying to find the working of the divine Spirit in the world of nature, it merely uses the phenomena of the natural world apart from their obvious charm, by translating them into types and symbols, not in virtue of their real nature, but with an arbitrary control. Hence, as I shall show in a future chapter, mystic art is nearly always symbolic. Some among even great artists have, at a time of spiritual stress, turned away from their usual activities or from the artistic point of view as spoiling them for the search for higher life.

So great a sculptor and painter as Michelangelo, in his old age, wrote: "Neither painting nor sculpture will charm the soul which is turned towards that divine love which opened its arms on the cross to receive us." [1]

Of all the arts, that of sculpture, the most objective simple and realist of them, is least adapted to the impulses of mystic religion. Works of sculpture are the result of very slow and laborious processes; and when they are finished they occupy space, and stand hard and impervious. Impressionism in sculpture can scarcely be distinguished from indolence and slovenliness, things which no one can seriously defend, and all attempts to infuse into sculpture by means of symbolism higher and more rarefied thought seem to me doomed to failure.

There is some ground in psychology for the view held in the Eastern Church that while painted icons were allowable, sculptured icons were not. It is indeed clear that attempts to embody mystical religious ideas in painting are not nearly so hopeless as similar attempts in sculpture. Paintings, not being made in three dimensions, but on a flat surface, do not occupy space in the hard and aggressive fashion in which works of sculpture monopolize it. We can look at them as much or as little as we please, and when we are satisfied pass on. A few strokes with a brush will destroy what a

[1] Quoted in J. Maritain's *Art et Scolastique*, p. 115.

few strokes of the brush have made. And forms in painting can be far less rigid and determined than in sculpture, backgrounds more fanciful, distances more obscure. In painting hints and suggestions are possible, and they need not be completely worked out.

Nevertheless, I do not think that even painting is really a suitable or satisfactory medium for mysticism, especially in a time of exact study and realism in art. If an artist's drawing is incorrect and his colouring crude, loftiness in meaning and suggestion is commonly lost on critical eyes. And uncritical eyes are so subjective and various in their interpretation of suggestions of a mystical kind that we cannot reach solid ground.

To the subject of mysticism in art, that is plastic and graphic art, especially Christian art, I return in Chapter VII.

It is a wonderful proof of the breadth of the Greek intellect that in the very time of the brightest bloom of Greek art, the early fourth century, we have a protest against its non-moral character from the greatest of Greek philosophers. Plato, on the ground that Homer repeats unworthy tales as to the gods, would prohibit the reading of the *Iliad*; and in his splendid dialogues he nowhere shows any love or admiration for the glorious works of painting and sculpture which in his time made Athens the jewel of the world. In the *Laws* he even

speaks with respect of the art of Egypt because it was unchanging, whereas the art of Greece was progressive. Indeed, with Plato begins the eternal quarrel between art and morals which has gone on to our own times. Plato was both a mystic and a puritan, though his puritanism did not much resemble any form of it which Christianity could accept.

In the history of Christianity iconoclasm has been a recurring phenomenon. It was natural that the rising religion should desire the destruction of works of art which were essentially pagan in character. Later the Iconoclasts were for destroying even Christian images, holding that it was impious to try to represent spiritual things by copies of what appealed to the senses. In many countries in the Middle Ages there were outbursts of Puritanism. In England, from the ruin wrought in our churches, we have good reason to know how little the extreme reformers appreciated any form of graphic and plastic art.

Puritanism, however, in England was not, like asceticism, an irreconcilable foe to plastic art. In a well-reasoned and temperate work, recently published,[1] Mr. J. Crouch has maintained that there is not any ultimate incompatibility between the two tendencies. He tries to show that it was not art as such, but the use of art to produce figures of the Virgin

[1] *Puritanism and Art.*

and the Saints which served the purpose of superstition, and tended to encourage what the Puritans regarded as idolatry, which was hateful to the great Puritan party. In a measure he is right. As it was its connection with pagan worship which caused the early Christians to abhor contemporary sculpture and painting, so it was the association of church art with what the Puritans regarded as the errors and abominations of Rome, which caused their hostility to art. And that hostility was mainly confined to the extreme members of the Puritan party. It was carried to much greater lengths in Scotland, by John Knox and his associates, than in England, for Scotland has always led the way in the anti-Roman revolt. A more recent and far more thoroughgoing work than that of Mr. Crouch, Mr. G. G. Coulton's *Art and the Reformation*, has waged war upon the current notions that the Middle Ages were a time of a lofty Christian art, and that the Reformation was moved by a spirit hostile to all higher art. Mr. Coulton's views may be one-sided: but he is a first-rate historical authority, and always works upon definite evidence, which he can estimate as very few can. And it is proved by the whole history of Christianity that the Puritanism of the sixteenth century was no new phenomenon. Many of the great teachers of the Middle Ages, especially S. Bernard, were as distrustful of art in churches as were the

Reformers, much more so than the Lutherans for example. The havoc wrought in our churches and cathedrals has been due far more to the decay of the artistic faculty in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than to religious intolerance. Our churches suffered far more from neglect and indifference than from active hostility. And Milton will always remain an undeniable proof that Puritanism and a keen sense of beauty in art are quite compatible. So far as the mass of the Puritans were tolerant of any art, it was rather art in the form of music and poetry than art in the form of sculpture and painting. The plastic and graphic arts declined in England with the spread of the Puritan spirit, and so far as they were practised in the country were mainly in the hands of foreigners. The Renaissance never had among us the full swing which it had in Italy and France, and in other directions in Germany and Flanders. It is only since the revival of portrait painting in England in the hands of Reynolds and Gainsborough, and especially since the rise of the art of landscape painting in the hands of Constable and Crome, that we have had respectable native schools of art. Undoubtedly the middle classes, among which Puritanism has been most rife, became dull to every form of artistic creation, until the middle of the nineteenth century; and even since then, they have been much at sea, not knowing

what to admire, and incapable, with the exception of some noteworthy personalities, of artistic enthusiasm. But their dullness has arisen rather from the materialistic spirit of trade and from the needs of mass-production than from the Puritan spirit.

CHAPTER IV

ORIGINS OF ART, NATURALIST, HUMANIST, RELIGIOUS

THE plastic arts may be arranged in two classes. In the one class stand architecture and decoration, not directly imitating nature, in the other painting and sculpture, so far as they are mimetic, that is, so far as they represent the forms of nature, whether landscape, vegetable and animal forms, or man himself.

I

In recent years a very learned and bold theorist, Professor Strzygowski of Vienna, has tried to transpose all the current views as to the derivation of mediæval and especially of North European decoration, maintaining that it is not derived as we have supposed from Rome and the Ægean lands, but rather by a direct route from Armenia and Northern Syria, and indeed ultimately from Persia. He has also maintained that the original art of the Aryan peoples was decorative only, consisting in patterns and arrangements of colour of a

non-mimetic kind. The mimetic element was taken over from Greece and the Hellenistic civilization of the Eastern Ægean, whence it spread largely through the conquering influence of Rome. It even seems from some passages in the works of Strzygowski that he regards the introduction of this naturalist and humanist element in the Christian art of Northern Europe as a misfortune. He is strongly anti-classical and pro-German in his view of culture; and anthropology and pre-history interest him more than European history, which he is disposed to regard as an episode, and a somewhat short episode, in the history of the world.

I shall not attempt to criticize the theories of Strzygowski,[1] which have been welcomed by some of the more anti-Christian and anarchic of the schools of thought abroad as leading us to a wider view of culture, and fatal to the dominance of what he calls the academic, that is classically founded, conceptions of human art and life. I do not know how far his erudite works have had an effect in England: but there are prevalent here many views of art and history which are akin to his, and are likely to shelter themselves behind his learning.

The religions which are fundamentally Unitarian do not cherish or even countenance mimetic art: the history of Israel and Islam

[1] One of this writer's great works has appeared in English, *The Origin of Christian Church Art*, 1923.

proves this. And it is clear that religions to which God is primarily transcendent must have a rooted dislike to representing the divine element in the world by natural forms. Anthropomorphism is its bugbear. Hence the intense and bitter hatred of idolatry which filled the Hebrew Prophets, and which is stimulated and preserved even in modern times by the reading of Old Testament literature. We still repeat in Church the commandment "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image," though we dilute the force of the commandment by interpreting it as meaning that images must not be made for the purpose of worship, and even that modified form of the commandment is taken in a transformed or evanescent sense by the Roman and the Greek Churches. But to the stricter Jews every kind of representational art was an abomination. The Jewish coinage alone, among the coinages of the ancient world, rigidly abstains from the representation of human beings, animals, or even plants. Only under the semi-heathen Jewish dynasties of the Hellenistic age do we find even representations of consecrated vessels, and branches of trees used in sacred rites.

And Islam carries on the torch. In the splendid mosques of Saracens and Turks the decoration is only geometric; if any other forms are introduced for the sake of variety, they are only sentences in Arabic writing,

worked sometimes into elaborate patterns. This Semitic temper survived into early Christianity in a certain measure; and afterwards iconoclastic fits came over the rulers and peoples of the Eastern Empire. But even as early as the Christian art of the Roman Catacombs, the hatred of natural forms did not prevail; and on the whole until the Hebraic revival, which played so great a part in the Protestantism of Northern Europe, images and natural scenes were allowed in art; though the Eastern Church generally, while it allowed such representations in painting, prohibited them in the more realistic art of sculpture, from a fear of countenancing idolatry.

We find other tendencies in the great religions which combined a humanist with a religious basis, Christianity and Buddhism. These through all their history have had relations, though not always of a friendly character, with contemporary art of a mimetic and historic type. But when one goes beyond this very general observation, one comes into a region of cross-influences and compromises which are very complicated.

However that be, I am proposing in this book to treat only of the arts of the second class, in which the representation of natural objects is predominant. That these arts arose in the countries in the east of the Mediterranean region, and were thence propagated, is an

obvious fact. That the cave-man of many thousands of years ago, like many existing tribes of savages, had a curious and sometimes startling force and originality in the representation of animals does not make any difference, since the art of prehistoric man did not survive through the ages, but seems to have flourished by fits and starts and to have died away again.

In graphic and plastic art there are three elements, the respective vogue of which, in the art of any age, determines its main character. I propose here to sketch the origin and nature of these three elements; leaving it to future chapters to trace their working in the modern world, and especially in the art of Christianity. The three elements are: 1, Naturalism, 2, Humanism, 3, Religion.

II

1. *Naturalism.* This is the inspiration of art which comes direct from the joy of life, and the appreciation of the world of nature. It is primarily imitative, and especially appropriate to youth and to the season of Spring. The love of nature urges the primitive man, or the primitive element in man, to enjoyment; and it also prompts him to copy the interesting things around him in various materials, wood, stone, terra-cotta, pigments of various kinds.

It is not easy to say how far the most primitive carvings and paintings which have come

down to us in the dwellings of the cave-man were prompted by the mere impulse to imitation; and how far they were prompted by the humanist and religious motives of which I shall shortly speak. It is the latter which have most impressed recent anthropologists and archæologists; but if we consider how children are disposed to cherish copies, however poor, of anything which they love, we shall be disposed to think that the mere impulse to copy has much to do with the origins of art. Girls will see in an almost shapeless doll a copy of the baby to the love of which a sub-conscious tendency urges them; boys will speak of a stick as a horse or a gun. And children will do what they can to make mere hints resemble the natural forms which they recall to their minds.

As the delight of life goes naturally with jest and laughter, pure naturalist art tends to comedy and to caricature. Homer with his usual appropriateness calls Aphrodite, the goddess of love, laughter-loving; and although the *Iliad* is full of slaughter and quarrelling, there is a wonderful lightness of heart in it, as of a people awaking to the sense of beauty and wonder in the world.

It is the more remarkable that, as all archæologists know, the age which produced the Homeric poems was almost entirely destitute of any works of painting and sculpture. The

graves of that age, unlike the graves of preceding and following ages, are barren of distinctive or interesting works of art. The love of nature and of the reproduction in art of natural scenes, which was a marked feature of the prehistoric period which is called the Minoan or Mycenæan Age, had died away, and the art which is properly Hellenic had not yet arisen. Such art as existed at the time was very simple, and conversant mainly with geometric and spiral forms. The artistic genius of the age seems to have found vent only in poetry.

The naturalist art of China and Japan is very fascinating, and has had considerable influence in modern times. When art in Europe was uncertain and distrustful of its ideals, an art which had been developed through ages among a people of much natural taste, and which had obviously a close relation to the beauty and charm of nature, came in as a very powerful impact. But really it is not homogeneous with European ideas, and it appears as a foreigner and invader. No healthy-minded European would think that the types of beauty admired in the Far East are really superior to those of our Western world; and a mingling of the two can only produce hybrids of no survival value. So we appreciate Chinese art, however much it may attract us, from the outside and not from the inside.

I am speaking, of course, of the popular art

of Eastern lands; not, for example, of the early Chinese landscapes, in which some critics find hints of mystery and infinity.

Naturalist art does not belong exclusively to any age or any nation. It springs up at all periods. It has way in the primitive art of the pre-historic cave-dwellers and the Eskimos. It is an under-current in the art of Egypt and Crete. It is present in all stages of Greek art, though least prominent in the great ideal age. It is to be traced in the sculpture of the arches and capitals and misereres of Gothic cathedrals. It is to art what laughter is to life, a sub-current of the joy of life. And in every age, when the prevalent schools of art are stale and stagnant, painters fall back on naturalist art, as a thing which cannot be wrong; and from that recourse new schools of art arise to take the place of the old. The painter Eupompus told the young Lysippus to turn from the study of the works of his great predecessors to nature, as nature alone was worthy of being followed. That touch of history has been repeated a hundred times since; and most young artists of promise have been ready to take the advice. Art, like Antæus, has constantly renewed its strength by contact with mother earth, and has set out constantly on courses which at the time seemed new, though usually they turn out to have abundant parallels in past history.

Naturalist art in its simpler forms does not reach a very high level. We may greatly admire a Japanese drawing of a fish or a cat; and such drawings add an element of humour which is absent in the mechanical productions of photography. In modern days, one form of naturalist art, landscape painting, has reached a very high level, and probably gives as much pleasure as any form of painting. And it may, as I hope to show in a future chapter, have a distinctly religious tinge.

For most people naturalist art is closely connected with the Dutch schools of painting. To many people, in whom imagination and ideality are not highly developed, these schools are attractive. But others find them monotonous and uninspiring. Probably few people can spend much time in the long galleries of Dutch pictures in the Louvre without feeling satiety. Similarly the over-naturalist novel-writers tend to become quite uninteresting. The novels of Maupassant in France and some of those of Arnold Bennett in England are thus lacking in interest. They give us careful sketches of every-day life, but they do not reach the high level of really imaginative fiction. However, the term naturalist is often wrongly applied to novels which are really of quite another character. One hears Dickens and Zola spoken of as naturalist writers. This is certainly a mistake; both are essentially humanist. Dickens

deals entirely with types, characters who could never be found in actual life. And Zola writes with a curiously inverted idealism : an idealism which puts brutality, crime and lust in the place formerly reserved in novels for affection and self-sacrifice. In fact, extreme naturalism is so dull, even to the writer, that he is sure to slip away from it in one direction or another towards an ideal of some kind.

III

2. *Humanism in art.* Though the mere love of producing an artificial copy of the visible world is one of the impulses which are at the root of art, it is not the only nor even the most primitive impulse ; for we contribute even to the perceptions of everyday life a subjective element, in our way of regarding nature. It has been shown by critics, especially the Danish critic Lange, that painting and sculpture do not arise from direct imitation of nature, but from the putting together of the facts given by nature by a mental construction, according to the tendencies of the spirit of man. That Lange is right will easily be seen by anyone who considers the efforts of savages. And our children, who pass in childhood through something parallel to the savage condition, work in a similar way. In their sketch books one does not find attempts to represent direct experiences based on objective perception of nature, but

memory sketches of the points which have most impressed them in looking at things. They usually completely neglect perspective, in order fully to represent objects which have interested them. A horse must have four legs even when he stands in an attitude in which one would be concealed. Both eyes of a man must appear, even when he is standing in profile, and so forth.

Picture-writing, among primitive peoples, altogether subordinates exact representation of nature to the desire to tell a story clearly. Even works of art so advanced as the man-headed bulls of Assyria have five legs, so that those who look at them from the front and from the side shall alike see the right number.

At a higher level, humanist art rises to the conception of ideal beauty, especially the beauty of men and women, and to the expression of what is noteworthy in the past history of mankind, or in dreams of a future better than the past. Humanism and the ideal are the most powerful impulses in Greek art.

According to the almost universal view of critics ancient Greece is the great revealer and arbitress of beauty. In Greece the human body and its clothing, statues and paintings, the temple and the portico were directed towards the production of ideal beauty. This has not been the case, in anything like the same degree among other peoples. Reasoned morality,

physical science, literature, art, all took their rise in Greece. But whereas in other fields modern achievement has rivalled, or in some cases far surpassed, the Greek level, in the pursuit of human beauty we are still in many respects below it. No people or school, unless a few of the Italian artists of the Renaissance, has been able to rival and to outdo the Greeks in the pursuit of beauty, so far as the beauty of humanity is concerned. In some branches of art, in architecture in the Middle Ages, and in landscape painting in modern times, men have gone far beyond Greek achievements; but anything like the Greek sense of, and love of, beauty has not existed elsewhere, save perhaps, on a lower level, in China and Japan.

In the rise of Greek sculpture we may trace in the clearest way the gradual formation of beautiful types. Until the sixth century B.C. Greek art had hardly reached any sense of beauty: like the surrounding peoples, the Greeks were contented with clumsy images, of helpless and inexpressive type. As the Greeks themselves were aware, it was athletics, the physical exercises of young men, who competed naked in the gymnasia in running, leaping, wrestling and other sports, which gave rise to the sense of beauty. It was the custom to set up in the sacred places of Greece, Olympia, Delphi and elsewhere, the statues of those who were victorious in the games. From the sixth

century onwards these statues rapidly improved in rhythm of outline and charm of detail, until in the middle of the fifth century great sculptors like Myron, Polycleitus and Pheidias were able to produce forms of extreme beauty, based on models, but going beyond nature, catching the intention of nature, and carrying it out with more perfection than nature itself.

It was certainly the statues of young athletes which first reached a high level of ideal beauty. But the idea of beauty, when it had once prevailed, passed from these statues of naked youths to drapery. Beauty in drapery is obviously very different in character from beauty in the naked form; but the faculties practised in the latter went on to work on the former. And as the male body was the great study of artists, so was drapery of the female form. Nude women were not introduced into great sculpture until the fourth century. The fixing of the type of undraped female beauty was the great work of Praxiteles and his contemporaries. In the sculpture of the Parthenon, for example, there are no nude figures of women; but charming drapery is so managed as to emphasize the lines of the forms beneath; beauty of form and beauty of drapery work together to produce a wonderful result.

Thus the sense of beauty arose in Greece, and for two centuries was busy in producing statues of men and women, which made up a gallery

of human charm which has never been surpassed. In Greece the discovery of beauty scarcely passed beyond humanity, at all events in the great age of Greece. A few animals familiar to man—the horse, the dog, the bull—were also sculptured in noble and ideal forms. But plant-life did not attract the Greeks, in the early period. They formed a few types of architectural detail from the lotus and the acanthus ; but these types were stiff and unprogressive. It was only in the Hellenistic age, at Alexandria and elsewhere, that successful attempts were made to represent flowers and leaves either in their natural forms or in conventionally decorative shapes. And at Alexandria we find also far more of perspective, and of the representation of such objects as rocks and trees, which however were never depicted with anything like the success attained by modern schools of painting.

Thus it is to Greece that the world owes the dawning of the idea of beauty in art. And all countries which have since attained to any high consciousness of beauty, notably Italy in the Renaissance, have worked on Greek lines, and taken Greece for their schoolmistress. And nations which have not been influenced by Greece in any great degree, such as China and India, and even Christian countries in the Middle Ages, have never risen to a high sense of the beauty of the human form.

We might then well try, taking the sense of beauty in its origin and early development in Greece, to analyse it into its elements. But this can only be done in a very imperfect way. In the case of athletes it does not consist in mere strength (this is never over-pronounced as it is in many modern types), but in strength combined with health and rounded graceful outlines. In the case of women it is harder to define. Every one feels that such figures as the Aphrodite of Melos or the Aphrodite recently found at Cyrene are lovely ; but it is not easy to say why. No doubt it would be tempting to say that they represent that in woman which stimulates male desire ; but it is very doubtful whether types of ideal beauty are so stimulating to desire as forms of a certain piquancy and fascination. Still more difficult is it to determine what makes beauty in the arrangement and lines of drapery. That is a subject on which a fashionable dressmaker might pronounce a decided opinion. But in a few months she would probably take a view diametrically opposite, for her aim is not ideal beauty, but fashion which is constantly changing.

But although a perception of beauty in art may best be started in individuals, as it was started in history, by an appreciation of works of Greek artists, of course no one will suppose that beauty is confined to them. The Italian Renaissance may fairly be considered as a

continuation of Greek art under fresh conditions; and it may often be desirable to use the great works of the Italian painters, rather than those of Greek sculptors, to rouse in children and in young people the dormant love of beauty.

In all things Greece is the incomparable exponent of humanism. The two greatest discoveries which man has ever made have been the discovery of God, which was mainly due to the Jews, and the discovery of man himself, which was the work of Greece. When Socrates turned, as he said, from the comparatively purposeless investigation of physical phenomena to the study of human nature, of ethics and thought, he reflected in the world of philosophy the process which was taking place also in literature and art, in the writing of history and poetry and oratory. "Know thyself" was inscribed on the temple at Delphi; and it was by "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control" that Greece gained her incomparable place in the history and education of the world. In Greece the human race arrived, as men arrive at some period of their lives, at a stage at which it became conscious of its powers and its destinies, of the ways of good and evil, of happiness and misery, so that it began to move on with clear eyes and steady steps towards higher development.

But, it will be said, Greek art was essentially

religious, concerned with the figures of the gods and their dealings with men even more fully than with mere human action. This is quite true; but Greek religion also was intensely humanist. The gods and goddesses were but idealized men and women; they embodied, not a vague sense of mystery and awe, but human qualities raised to the highest point. In relief and painting they mingle with men on equal terms, only conspicuous by their greater charm and dignity; they are only super-men and super-women; and when men rose to a certain level of dignity they became heroes, hardly to be distinguished from the gods, and held in like honour.

In the Hellenistic age, which succeeded the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek humanistic art set out on a career of conquest, and spread from Gaul on the west to North India on the east, almost obliterating the art of the native races, just as Greek philosophy and literature spread out into the philosophy and literature of the whole Western world. But the centre of gravity of it lay always in the lands which bordered the Ægean Sea. The great cities of the eastern Mediterranean, Athens, Pergamon, Ephesus, Alexandria and the rest became the foci of all thought and culture. Owing to the loss of the literature and most of the material remains of these great cities,—a loss in part redeemed by the rescue from oblivion

of scattered monuments of culture such as the poems of Theocritus and the sculpture of Pergamon,—we do not fully realize what the world owes to the great writers and artists of the Hellenistic age; but every year brings fresh testimony to their greatness, and a sense of it is slowly spreading. Greek art so entirely conquered Rome that it is almost a misnomer to speak of Roman art at all. We know the names of scores of Greek artists in the Roman age, but we have the record of hardly a single artist of Italian blood. In the days of Trajan and Hadrian there was a remarkable revival of Greek art, a sort of St. Martin's summer, which adorned the great age of the Antonines with wonderful monuments; and gave to the vast Roman constructions of that age a form and a finish which will always be memorable.[1]

The rise and spread of Christianity by degrees strangled Greek Hellenistic art, which was closely connected with the pagan religions, and lost its vitality under the pressure of the new faith. It was dormant during the Middle Ages; but at the Renaissance was revived and set out on a new and splendid career. Artists like Leonardo and Michelangelo, but for the discovery of works of Greek humanist art, would have started from a different, and a far lower, level. And they were perfectly aware of the

[1] On this subject I must venture to refer to the later pages of my recent *New Chapters in Greek Art.*

fact. Anyone who reads that most illuminating work, the *Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, will realize that, though the artists of the Renaissance did not revolt from Christianity, it was not mainly from works of Christian art that they took their models and received their inspiration. So far as they were humanist they were Hellenic. And in all the numberless schools of painting and sculpture which have since arisen, Greece has been a perpetual instructress and prompter.

IV

3. *Religion in art.* It is held by modern anthropologists that art owed its origin in part to the influence of magic, the precursor of religion. When we find in some of the caves of France which served as shelters for the men of very remote ages, drawings of stags and other animals of the chase, it appears that the artist hoped by such drawings to make the finding of his prey easier and more certain. When we find a rude sketch of a religious ceremony, it is likely that the artist hoped thereby to acquire power over the spiritual forces which surround us, and to secure some temporal blessing. But by degrees (and this is one of the greatest steps in the upward history of the human race) magic has given way to religion, and these spiritual powers, instead of being regarded as mere means for the attainment of worldly good, have come to be regarded as

something raised above man, to whose will man has to bow in reverence, and to carry out whose purposes in the world has become his highest duty.

We must not, I think, carry the magical theory to a pedantic length, or regard it as accounting for all the facts, since there can be little doubt that the practical motive is crossed and reinforced by the mere love of mimetic artistic activity. Since some animals, such as bower birds, seem to have an instinct for imitation and the production of what is beautiful, it would be difficult to deny some such instinct to primitive man.

V

In the world of art the naturalist, the humanist and the religious tendencies and impulses are intermingled, and none of them is in any country wholly dominant. The merely naturalist impulse is fully developed in the secular art of China and Japan, in which mountain and river, plant and animal life, and the ordinary sensuous amusements of the people are represented with ever-fresh interest and delight. But even in China and Japan this tendency is mingled with others more serious, derived from religion. Buddhism, which adopted the teaching of Greek art in the age after Alexander the Great, has introduced into India and China alike a religious art, which centres in the repre-

sentation of the Founder of Buddhism, and narrates the events of his life, and his deeds in previous stages of existence. There is an obvious contrast between the naturalist and the religious art of the Far East, and it has recently been shown that the two sprang from different sources. In Japan and China there are two religions: on the one hand nature worship and the veneration of ancestors; on the other hand the severe and ascetic religion of Buddhism, which was imported from India at the beginning of our era. In the same way, in art, the naturalist tendency belongs to the race; but the human form and really religious art came with Buddhism from India, and accepted ways of rendering the human form and religious legends from the art of Greece in the age of Hellenism.

I do not mention in this connection Confucianism, because it is rather a system of ethics, in some ways a very fine system, than a religion. It combines, however, easily with the religion of ancestor-worship.

In the early art of Egypt there is a similar dualism. The great monumental art of Egypt is solemn, stately and religious in character, devoted to the gods and to the kings who were regarded as their embodiments. But in the paintings on the walls of tombs the artist runs riot in representations of natural objects, perhaps meant for the pleasure and enjoyment of

the dead person: the farm with its industry, the hunting of birds in the marsh, the games and sports of the people. Here a vivid naturalism has course, in marked contrast to the solemn conventions of the Temple sculpture. Even the aristocratic and formal art of Assyria has bequeathed to us some of the most vivid and striking representations of hunting the lion and the wild horse which can be found anywhere.

And the same two elements may be seen in the art of our own Gothic cathedrals, where the strongly religious representations in window and fresco are supplemented by little outbursts of joyous naturalism in the capitals of columns and the misereres of the choir.

CHAPTER V

NATURALIST ART AND RELIGION

I

THERE can be no doubt that science and the study of nature have during the last century, especially in France, greatly altered the habits and character of painting. The science of optics and the analysis of colour have been active in laboratories and universities. And the habit of close scientific observation and of analysis has spread far beyond the schools of science. It affects us all every day, especially in our subconscious strata, so that many old pictures admired in their day, seem to us to have no relation to fact and experience. And modern painters have been conscious of this tendency, and tried in their works to make account of it. Considerable schools, the impressionists, the pointillists, the pleinairists, have taken it for granted, and tried to work out its corollaries and its meaning in practical art-work. If one reads the works of recent art-critics, one finds them full of criticisms from this point of view. Many of

them seem to think that it is the only subject they need discuss. The discussion of planes, of complementary colours, of light-values seems to them to be all that is necessary in order to place artists in relation to one another and the evolution of art.

And no doubt such analytical investigations are of the utmost importance to those who would understand the technique of art, especially in relation to practical work. But they are less important to those who study not the technique of art but its underlying ideas and tendencies. These latter are the spirit, while technique is but the body in which the spirit dwells, or indeed rather the garments which it wears. A highly developed technique may go with sordid or merely commonplace ideas, as notably in some of the Dutch painters. Conversely, really fine ideas may go with poor or perverted technique, and be concealed by it as a beautiful body may be concealed by ill-fitting or tasteless clothes, or as a beautiful spirit in a man may be rendered invisible to those who have not keen insight by an awkward and ungainly presence. And as painting appeals to the eyes, which we are accustomed to regard as the most direct and objective witnesses, when we recognize a painting as tasteless and poor, we commonly become blind to any inner merit it may have.

But art is far more closely related to the

emotions and the active powers than to the intelligence. And here we are in another region. All our knowledge of matter, of our selves, of our own tendencies and the history of the race, cannot possibly direct or dominate our active powers, or satisfy our spiritual longings. Will, desire, personality, God, remain as the great realities of the practical world. These are ends, whereas physical nature, and even our own inherited constitutions, are but means which we use to attain these ends. And our active impulses, the very kernel of human nature, remain almost unchanged, little affected by any extension of knowledge. But the expressions of those impulses, whether intellectual or artistic, do vary greatly with changing knowledge and altered philosophy.

Not less important than the influence of natural and human science on modern art is the action on art of the great ethical and social changes which have taken place among us. This is, of course, far too wide and difficult a subject to be treated of satisfactorily in this place. Such great social changes as the greatly increased restlessness of modern life, the spread of democracy and plutocracy, the rapidly changing status and employments of women, have necessarily a great disturbing power in religion and religious art. Still more closely related to art is the decay of poetry and of idealism, which has almost destroyed among us the sense

of beauty. When we move about the country we see on all sides the fair face of the land disfigured by coal-mines, factories and railways, and flaring advertisements on our roads distract both the eye and the mind from the enjoyment of natural scenes. I do not think that any more crushing proof of the decay of the sense of beauty could be found than in the recent fashion of women to cut short their hair, to do away with those charming locks which have been the theme of poets from Homer downwards. One feels paralysed when one tries to speak of beauty to a woman who thinks short masculine hair more pleasing than the lovely arrangements of past days. No doubt in many periods the hair of women has been arranged in too stiff and formal a manner; but to do away with it altogether is an abandonment of all poetry and idealism. But these are themes on which one might enlarge indefinitely, without any hope of affecting established custom.

Individuals and societies alike are active, energizing powers, working from within outwards, always driving towards some imagined end or purpose. Primarily they act towards self-expansion, towards a fuller and a less difficult life. But beyond the mere drive towards expansion, there is in man a faculty of ideas, a power of passing beyond that which is merely pleasing or expedient in the direction of the ideal. The pursuit of truth, goodness and

beauty occupies the higher activities of the race. The attainment of truth is the end of science, the attainment of goodness the end of religion, the attainment of beauty the end of art. Of course these tendencies do not act in complete independence one of another. Enthusiasts may pursue one of the three lines regardless of the others ; but well-developed men will see that all are worthy of pursuit and all bear on one another.

No doubt the progress and even the vitality of a community needs the services of fanatics. But for the well-developed individual, proportion in pursuits is necessary. He who is a fanatical pursuer of truth, careless of goodness and beauty, becomes hard and unhuman. He who cares only for goodness becomes fierce and intolerant. He who pursues only beauty may become a moral wreck.

The present work is concerned with art, and with Christian art in particular. But I shall not attempt to discuss art out of relation to science on the one hand and morality on the other.

In the last chapter we touched very briefly on the origin of art in magic, or primitive religion which grows out of magic. We have next to consider the religious aspects of more developed art, or the religious element in art. Religion has to do with the relations between man and God. And God is revealed to man in three

ways : first in the law and order of the natural world, second in human history, and third to the spirits of individuals in what may roughly be called mysticism, mysticism being taken as the intellectual and emotional expression of the inner contact with God.

Taking religion in this broad sense, I think it may be shown that it enters as an element into the growth and appreciation of art alike in its naturalistic and its humanist forms. No doubt the love of beauty is in itself religious, since beauty is one of the forms in which the divine element in the world is revealed. But it is nearer the mark to consider it as a substitute for religion, as is patriotism, than as in itself a religion. For the worship of beauty is in most men too slight to constitute a religion. A real religion must dominate alike the thought and the energies of those who accept it, and those who worship beauty only will not rise to wise thinking or noble action. But the admiration and desire of beauty may enter as an element into various forms of religion. We will consider art in relation to religion under the three heads set forth in the last chapter, as first naturalist, next humanist, and third intrinsically religious. And again the subject naturally divides twofold.

First, there is the relation of art to natural religion, to the religious feelings and impulses which are part of human nature ; and second, there is the relation of art to the definite and

organized religions of which Christianity is the only one which really concerns us. At present we deal only with religion in the broader sense : we shall come to Christianity later.

II

It cannot be doubted that a branch of painting in which modern artists far excel alike those of the ancient world and those of the Renaissance is landscape-painting. We have but to look at the best of the paintings from Pompeii or Rome, or the backgrounds of the very greatest of the Italian and Flemish painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to see how far inferior they were to modern artists in truth to nature. This is mainly accounted for by the growth of natural science. We have studied the formation of rocks and seas, of trees and flowers, with infinitely more care and success than our ancestors. And the help given by photography, which has enabled us to stereotype and carry away with us more exact and naturalistic representations of every natural scene, has been a valuable aid. Thus our eyes have become more deep-seeing ; we look at the world with more attention and concentration. As regards the mere faculty of seeing things distant or minute, the untrained sight of the uncivilized man is far more efficient than that of the civilized man. And children are commonly keener sighted than adults. But the

civilized adult sees with more trained and understanding eyes. He knows what to look for, and he reflects more on what he sees, so that the view of a natural scene tells him a thousand things which the mere child of nature does not perceive.

In speaking of natural scenes I include not only the distant view of mountains, river and sky, but every form of nature. Trees and plants, insects and animals depicted in the great paintings of the Renaissance often seem to us quite foreign to our experience. The birds of St. Francis, the lion of St. Jerome, the ox and the ass of scenes of the Nativity usually do not add to, but detract from, our appreciation of the paintings. It is true, as Ruskin points out, that often in the great Italian painters we may find a delightful touch of nature, a fish, or an animal or a flower which is not merely charming, but exact in truthfulness. Naturalistic details in work of definite school character are always likely to occur.

Nevertheless, broadly speaking, it has been reserved for the moderns to live on intimate terms with all the forms of the natural world, and to become so familiar with them that they are part of the furniture of our fancy, and any misunderstanding of them in a painting would cause discomfort and even pain to a student. From childhood onwards we are brought up among natural objects, and their representations

in photographs and diagrams. Thus a limit is set to the free action of painters in representing nature. A gross violation of natural appearances would not be tolerated. Such mixed forms as that of the centaur or the satyr would only be found in works professedly inspired by the Greeks.

And the results of the exact study of nature have spread far beyond the circle of researchers and teachers, so that the ordinary average person expects that the actual facts of nature will be portrayed in a painting. Certain schools of painting try to look down on this natural tendency, and speak contemptuously of mere representation. But the common feeling of mankind is against them. A mere representation of an ordinary object such as a flower or a rock, with no human element added, may not be a very high form of art: but the making of such studies is excellent practice for the artist; and it produces a habit of truthfulness to nature, which is of great value.

Those who are admirers of post-impressionist works of French art will despise the bewilderment of ordinary people when they enter an exhibition of such works, and when they declare that the pictures before them have no relation to fact and to natural appearance. Surely the right is rather with the natural man than with those who have sophisticated themselves into an admiration for what is unintelligible to

ordinary eyes and requires an elaborate justification. Art, like poetry, in order to reach a really high standard, and to live through the generations, must appeal to the ordinary faculties of mankind and be readily intelligible to all who have a faculty of observation.

The minute and detailed study of nature, leading to discoveries of her ways of working, has produced a strong feeling of loyalty and veneration for every discovered natural fact. Instead of a world at random, a mere show of disconnected facts, we have learned to realize a world of law and order, a world where every one thing is related to every other thing. It must be impossible for an experienced student of biology, of development in plants and animals, ever to look on one species of either as a separate and complete phenomenon. No doubt it would be contrary to a high conception of art to allow one's knowledge of nature unduly to dominate. For example, to depict horses in some of the attitudes which by the instantaneous photographs of Muybridge they are shown to assume in galloping seems to me bad art, because thus there is represented what never actually strikes the eyes. But, on the other hand, to depict horses in an attitude which they never assume would seem equally bad art.

But mere knowledge, however exact and detailed, would not enable an artist to become a successful landscape painter. He has also to

put into his work something of the emotion which we feel in the presence of beautiful scenes of nature, the forest, the mountain and the sea. No one would care for a landscape painting of photographic precision, but destitute of human emotion. We hang landscape paintings on our walls, in order that, when we look at them, there should live again in our spirits something of the delight and the charm which in a view of the scene itself have impressed themselves on the artist and he has imparted, or could impart, to us.

But the love and delight which we feel in natural scenes is essentially a religious emotion. Among the anthropomorphic Greeks this emotion gave rise to the belief in spirits of the wild and of the sea, satyrs, nymphs, tritons and the rest. Less prominent among the prosaic Romans, and among the city-loving Italians of the Renaissance, it revived in the last century, and inspired the poetry of Shelley and Wordsworth, and the painting of Constable and Turner. It seems to me that it was more dominant among the young half a century ago than it is at present ; but it is still an inspiring enthusiasm.

It is mainly beneath consciousness that the awe and mystery of natural scenes acts upon peoples at a low stage of development. That the temples of the gods are best placed on lofty hills, that the stupendous results of the working of natural forces have drawn men in

the direction of worship, is clear to every traveller. But it is evident that these vague venerations become less clear and powerful as men become city-dwellers and freer from the domination of the powers of nature. Art, which is often the successor and heir of naturalist religion, in particular the art of poetry, tries to satisfy the emotions which have become less profound, with a tingling which is really a reverberation of feelings thousands of years old. It stimulates a gentle stirring of the imagination in scenes which no longer terrify and awe. Is there anyone who, in contemplating the brilliant array of stars on a clear night, or in roving on rocky mountain-tops, or in solitary wanderings through forest, does not feel in his innermost being a stirring of the spirit? To satisfy that stirring, to guide it by a presentation of what is grand or lovely, is the great function of landscape painting. The artist chooses a scene which is naturally provocative of feeling, or at all events of the sentiment which is a gentle and evanescent form of feeling, and tries so to represent it on his canvas as to attract and charm the beholder.

That the sympathetic appreciation and love of nature is essentially religious is generally felt. But how far is it specifically Christian? This is an interesting question. A fresh and really religious feeling for nature may be found in some of the Psalms, especially the 104th and 107th,

and in certain passages in the Gospels, in both parables and teaching ; especially in the earliest Gospel of Galilee, there shines out an exquisitely fresh enjoyment of natural scenes. The Saviour dwells on the beauty of the lilies as greater than that of the splendid robes of a Solomon ; He has a fellow-feeling for the sparrows, not one of which is forgotten before God. He is evidently used to watching the clouds, and speaks of their prophecy of fair weather or foul. When He desires a more intimate communion with God, He retires into the desert, or climbs the mountain. The distant view of Jerusalem melts Him to tears, and gives occasion to the most pathetic lament to be found in all literature.

It must however be allowed that this fresh feeling for nature, natural in Galilee, tended to decrease as Christianity was more dominated by the dwellers in the great Hellenistic cities. It is absent from the Epistles of St. Paul, and the other early Christian writings. And in the history of the Church it comes to the surface but seldom. Most Christians were thinking too keenly of sin and redemption, of the battle with evil, and the life of the world to come, to turn meditative or appreciative eyes on the natural scenes amid which they dwelt. Yet we may sometimes see at least an unconscious undercurrent of love of natural beauty. It has been observed that the sites of the great Cis-

tercian monasteries are commonly in scenes of great natural beauty. And when in such scenes the monks erected magnificent abbeys, it is impossible to think that the sense of beauty and sublimity which is so conspicuously gratified in the buildings was quite dormant in contemplating the landscape around, which was usually in harmony with the buildings. The most beautiful of the mediæval combinations of the love of God and the love of nature is found in the well-known hymn of St. Francis, in which he praises God for the striking powers of nature, fire and water, the birds in the wood and the sheep in the field, speaking of them all as brothers and sisters. He had been in a measure anticipated by the hymn familiar to all—"All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord," which is included in the Book of Daniel. These hymns may be considered as a rendering of the same sympathy with nature which had given birth to the mythology and nature-worship of many peoples from the great ages of Egypt and Babylon onwards.

Even the holiday excursions of people in general, or at least of those who are not completely vulgarized by the trivial life of city-dwellers, are beautified by something of this feeling for nature. All of us feel the need of preserving in our over-crowded island scenes of natural charm ; and those who present to the public such beauty-spots are among our most

honoured benefactors. When we visit such a spot after a general holiday, and find trees with branches broken off them, or the ground littered with sandwich papers, we feel that it has been desecrated, and almost despair of public taste; but we are apt to forget that in a large proportion of the holiday-makers there was a quiet enjoyment of nature which perhaps to their vulgarity bore about the same proportion as the intrinsic beauty of the scene bears to the superficial disorder.

It may be said that the worship of nature is rather pantheistic than Christian. Yet Wordsworth and Ruskin, its prophets in the nineteenth century, were good Christians. This fact suggests that it is quite possible to combine, as did Wordsworth, a religious feeling for natural beauty with a Christian interpretation of nature. After all, Christian and pantheist ways of looking at the world of nature are radically different. The pantheist looks on that world as a revelation of spiritual powers, but the Christian looks at it as a scene made for man, as revealing the working of a spirit akin to that which is within man, as belonging after all to the same realm as that of human will and goodness. This is the spirit of Wordsworth, and it is really the spirit which has inspired some modern landscape painters. Wordsworth spoke of the exaltation of spirit which comes from the sight of a rainbow; and I think every real lover of

nature will share that exaltation. But he goes on to say that it is a form of natural piety. The Hebrews looked on a rainbow as embodying the promise that the world should not again be overwhelmed by a flood; we may regard it as a sovereign instance of fellow-feeling between God and man; we may feel that God and man alike rejoice in its beauty; and that the beauty was intended by the author of nature to raise our thoughts from the visible beauty to the Power who arranged it in order to lift the thought of man to a higher plane.

Some Christian writers have tried to find a close connection between the recognition of a hidden and divine life in nature and the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, the presence of God in the world in the person of his Son, Christ Jesus. This notion, if we examine it in a historic light, seems to me far-fetched. To begin with, the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is not a statement of historic fact, but an attempt to explain fact.[1] And it has been held in a great variety of forms, none of which perhaps is philosophically water-tight. The modern view which I am considering suffers from extreme improbabilities. It would suppose that the doctrine of the Incarnation, after being current in the Christian Church for many centuries, began after the Renaissance to influence art in the matter of the representation of

[1] *Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 386.

nature ; and it has to account for the fact that such influence took objective form, not in the hands of any mystic sect of Christianity, but among the Protestants of Holland and England. It is of course very difficult or impossible to limit the ways in which a belief dwelling in the sub-conscious strata of the mind may work its way into the externals of religion, or into the art which is often one of the manifestations of religion. And it would be easy to cite passages from modern writers such as Ruskin and Keble to prove in their sense of art an acceptance of some form of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. But it is quite another thing to find in that doctrine the whole source of modern naturalist and landscape art, a view which is fanciful and misleading.

Surely if we point out the truth that the modern delight in wild nature has been largely due to the influence of Rousseau, it is sufficient to prove that though the doctrine of the Incarnation is a Christian parallel to the love of nature, that love may inspire men who were not consciously inspired by the Christian doctrine.

It is remarkable how wide-spread is the interest and appreciation of the works of our great landscape painters, shewn not only by wealthy collectors and public museums, but by the general body of people in England. Sketching from nature has had great vogue, not merely as an elegant accomplishment, but as a great

factor in the life of those in easy circumstances. And landscapes are highly appreciated by the poorer classes. They have usually neither the knowledge nor the imagination fully to appreciate historic paintings, but the landscapes appeal to them at once. They probably enter into them as fully as the ordinary citizens of Athens entered into the work of Pheidias, or the middle-class people of Italy into the works of the great schools of Italian painting at the time of the Renaissance. The movement may fairly be called a popular one. And to those who take the broader view of Christianity as the recognition of the divine in the life of nature and of man, it will appear an essentially Christian movement.

CHAPTER VI

HUMANIST ART AND RELIGION

LET us take next the other great branch of representative art that is concerned with humanity—the depiction of historic or quasi-historic scenes, or of persons in daily life. If we compare the rendering of scenes in past history or in fiction by modern artists with such renderings by artists of past generations, one thing strikes us immediately. The progress of historic research has had on modern painters an influence parallel to that exercised by the growth of natural science on the painting from nature. In such matters as costume and background, the modern artist tries to be far more accurate than his predecessors ; tries, and on the whole succeeds. The Greeks did not try. When they portrayed a scene from Homer they represented the Homeric personages as clad and armed in the fashion of a later day. Even the gods appear in the dress and under the aspect of contemporary men, only imbued with more dignity and beauty. When artists of the Middle Ages represented the Fathers of the Church, they depicted them in the guise of contemporary

bishops or monks. Herod wears the crown of a mediæval monarch, and the Roman soldiers have the armour and dress of the mediæval warrior. Even in the Renaissance such anachronisms are the rule ; though some artists do make an effort to escape the obvious incongruity by giving to ancient personages a generalized and fanciful dress, such as was never actually worn. But now we work under the sway of archæology, and try to represent characters of a past age in the dress of their own time, with houses and churches in the background such as one would at the time have seen. Also in the representation of action there is far less of the general or conventional, the artist has a far more realistic imagination, and tries on his canvas to produce such a scene as a spectator would at the time have witnessed. Archæology does not appeal to the mass of mankind, who want to see not mere unvarnished fact but the inner meaning of the fact ; who care more to feel an echo of the emotions felt by historic persons than to see them in bodily presentment. One may fairly say that the element of archæology is scientific and independent of religion ; it is the idea and the emotion which are the field of religion. The great painter is he who, when he paints a scene from the history of a nation, makes those of the nation who look at it feel a new glow of patriotic enthusiasm, a new impulse of venera-

tion towards the national heroes. In the same way, when a great artist depicts some scene from the history of early Christianity or of the later Church, he will be most successful if he makes the spectator feel the deeper and permanent meaning of that scene, makes him realize that what was then done stands in a close relation to his own moral and spiritual life. To rejoice in the worthy depiction of a noble deed is a way of recognizing the communion of Saints, the unity of the history of the Church, and the revelation in every age of the continual working in that Church of the immortal spirit of the divine Head.

Nevertheless, slowly and inevitably, historic accuracy is making its way in art, and for this the reason is obvious. Truth must in the long run prevail over falsehood, for truth answers to that which is permanent and endures, while falsehood is ever fleeting and inconsistent.

No feature is more prominent in the religion of England and cognate countries than the love of truth—truth about nature, truth about history, truth about mankind. But truth need not be only superficial truth : there is a deeper and underlying truth which is much closer to the heart of religion than that which is obvious. The character of this truth may best be studied in the art of portraiture.

Portraiture is a living art, an art which by necessity must be living, since it has to do with

living men and women : and it occupies a great place in the activities of our artists.

In our galleries and museums portraits, painted and sculptured, occupy a great space. We possess a wonderful series of sculptured busts of noteworthy Greeks and Romans, the extent of which few people realize ; they are numbered not merely by hundreds but by thousands, and many of them are of very high merit. And since the revival of art in the fifteenth century we have an almost continuous contemporary portrait-record of remarkable men and women, who thus live on for us often more intimately than they live in biographies and books. These portraits are nothing like so familiar as they ought to be to students of history. And the great majority of those who look at them do so with uninstructed eyes, do not make allowance for the school and tendencies of the artist, make little attempt to see the person behind the face.

Any classification of portraits must be difficult, because the personal and individual character of each is its most striking feature ; the points of likeness between the various portraits of any age or any artist are less conspicuous. We easily recognize the ideal figures, such as the Madonnas, of a particular master, and discern in them the character of the painter. But it is less easy to make such observations in the case of portraits. Yet certain logical lines of

division between kinds of portraits, though they be not clearly cut, are a great help to study and knowledge.

I would distinguish in the portraits of all ages and nations three kinds—naturalist, characteristic and ideal.

Naturalist portraits are such as show no search or imagination, no effort to get at the personality or character. When poor on the technical side, such representations are altogether despicable, mere sign-paintings, as we say. But a naturalist painter with high technical qualifications may produce a portrait which many people in our day would admire. Some of the Roman portrait busts, in their hard and unmitigated naturalism, are regarded as faithful and excellent; and indeed it is a way of representing Romans which suits the stern and unimaginative character of the race. Modern portraits too are often quite unsympathetic, and give us only the hard external appearance of the subject.

As opposed to the sculptured portraits of Romans, the Greek portraits of the Hellenistic age are notably *characteristic*. One feels at once, in looking at them, that the artist slightly exaggerated in some points and diminished in others, that he selected what seemed to him really interesting and laid emphasis on it in comparison with what was commonplace. He represented a thoughtful face as more thought-

ful, a cynical face as more cynical, a humorous face as more humorous than it would seem to an ordinary spectator. The consequence of such procedure is that we have most vivid and interesting portraits of many of the great writers and philosophers of the later age of Greece. Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynics, Zeno the Stoic, Epicurus, Poseidonius are real to us across the ages; and we are sure that we should recognize them if we saw them, and even feel confident as to how they would speak, and how they would behave.

When character is depicted with humorous exaggeration, we have caricature; not the mere obvious and popular caricature which exaggerates the size of a nose or the curl of lips, but a really perceptive caricature, which shows us a man as he is, but even more so. The art of caricature is almost entirely modern, going naturally with want of respect, and presenting a parallel to the parody of poems and literary style. Caricature may be friendly or hostile, good-natured or ill-natured; it may be a formidable instrument of attack, or as gentle and kindly as Punch's caricatures of Mr. Gladstone.

The third kind of portrait, the *ideal*, is less common in modern days than it was in Greece, and especially in the great age of Greece. Representations of the gods in Greece depict them as idealized men and women, with the human imperfections and limitations lessened

or omitted; Zeus as the wise and dignified father of a family, Æsculapius as the faultless physician, Aphrodite as the perfect in physical charm. And as men and women in Greece were often raised to divine rank and made objects of worship after their death, so sculptors after their death, and even sometimes while they lived, represented them as free from imperfection and defect, as embodying the best ideals of the time in physical, intellectual, or moral charm.

A confusion is often made by modern critics between idealism and convention, causing a certain prejudice against the former. But in early Greek art the two can be readily distinguished; and it is a delightful study to trace how the mere helplessness and convention, which naturally sway the early works of Greek art before it had attained to maturity, give way to a noble and beautiful spirit of idealism, of a love for the beautiful and the best in nature, in the great fifth century. Of course the idealism which attracted and satisfied the Greeks in the great period does not wholly satisfy a modern world which is the result of nineteen centuries in which the Christian spirit has been, if not dominant, yet active and struggling. Idealism is no more to be confused with convention than goodness with respectability.

There can be no difficulty in discerning the natural relation towards the three tendencies

spoken of which must be taken up by any art which embodies or strives after the spirit of religion. Naturalistic portraiture will not specially attract it, though there is no reason why it should not appreciate, and strive to exhibit, all the natural beauties of form and face. But religion in its very essence places the unseen on a higher level than the seen; the qualities of mind and spirit have more kinship with it than have the mere products of nature. From the first, Christian art has cared more about the face, the index of the spirit, than about the bodily members. A simple comparison will make this clear. In archaic Greek statues of men and women in the sixth century B.C. the sculptor is far more successful in rendering the limbs and the body than in rendering the face; and convention lasts much longer in the latter field. The figures of the pediments of Ægina are little short of masterly in the development of arms and legs; but the heads are quite inexpressive, and convey little impression of the passions of conflict. On the other hand in the mature Christian art, just before the time of the Renaissance, while the human form is not understood, and is rendered clumsily, the faces are careful and expressive. It is a profound difference in the point of view. It is quite natural that in any Christian art the character and mental development should be held as of far greater account than muscles and the propor-

tions of the body. And this way of regarding the painting and sculpture of men and women has become a habit in all modern peoples, even more definitely in those who do not know much about art than in those to whom it has been a matter of study. Characteristic portraiture has a far greater interest than merely naturalist portraiture. We think of the former as living, of the latter as dead.

And since religion is far more intent on that which might be or ought to be than on that which is, is essentially a striving after the ideal, it is clear that art, so far as it is religious, will be an idealizing art. It will try, in the case of portraiture, to exhibit the possibilities of a face rather than its present state. Christianity holds that in every man and woman there is a potentiality of embodying some phase of the Christ ideal; therefore Christian art will look in a face for the traces of such a potentiality, and emphasize them more than the characteristics which arise from conflict in the world, or the mere inherited tendencies. In representing the saints of the Church, it will do all it can to make prominent the subtle changes in the features which come from lofty aspirations, constant self-denial, charity towards mankind. Such qualities as intensity of purpose, love of power, world-weariness, must often be represented in portraits: in these there is not essentially anything either Christian or anti-Chris-

tian; they may be turned either to good or to bad ends; certainly their adequate portrayal is a worthy object in art; but only when used for the good of mankind have they a religious aspect.

But religion, modern religion especially, does not content itself with thinking only of the spirit and its expression in the face, but also cares about the body, its health and vitality. And here especially it is the religion of Greece which has been the instructress for all time.

We realize how greatly the acceptance by some of the great Doctors of the Church of the Platonic doctrine of ideas and the systematized wisdom of Aristotle has tended to prevent Christianity from falling to a low intellectual level or being merged in fanaticism. And we feel that if Christianity had from the first taken up in regard to Greek art the attitude which it took up in regard to Greek philosophy, the world might have been infinitely richer. The great principle of Greek art was the beauty and charm of a healthy mind in a healthy body, *mens sana in corpore sano*. And just as the mental and ethical principles of Aristotle have tended in all ages to check fanaticism and unhealthy aberrations, so the artistic principles of Greece might have kept, and so far as they were accepted did keep, the arts of painting and sculpture from false and misleading tendencies. Many people in our days regard the Christian morality

of pureness and uprightness as outworn ; whence many ethical aberrations, including the greatest and most terrible of them, the German military spirit, which utterly set aside, for the sake of national ambition, all considerations of humanity and charity. Exactly parallel is the revolt, which has taken place in some artistic schools, against the Greek principles of art. As the ethical revolt has denied the value of goodness, so the artistic revolt has denied the value of beauty ; and has placed ugliness and horror on the same level with charm and sweetness. Nay, it has even gone further. In some of the coteries of artists the very name of beauty has been scouted, and artist has vied with artist in rejecting every vestige of law and order, and in thinking that mere individual cleverness is the test of excellence in art. We cannot with impunity reject the Greek gospel of art any more than we can with impunity reject the Christian standards of purity and charity.

It is not difficult to see how in some directions a blending of Greek humanism and modern science may tend to the raising and purification of art.

One matter in which these two tendencies are united is the culture of the body for health and development. The physical culture of the Greeks was, it is true, almost entirely confined to the male sex ; but in regard to that sex it was most thorough-going. Every free man,

not only the young, but even the middle-aged, spent part of the day in the bath and the palæstra in exercises calculated to develop every natural power and to produce a thoroughly harmonious body. This was, as is generally acknowledged, the secret of the perfection of Greek sculpture, which presents to us an endless variety of beautiful athletic forms in every graceful pose and in every variety of action. The influence of this beautiful series of forms on modern art, on modern athletics, and even probably on the health of modern men, has been incalculable. The dumb-bells used by Greek trainers have been re-introduced into our gymnasia. The exercises usual in Greece—running, leaping, wrestling and boxing—are still the favourite exercises among us. We have even revived an imitation of the Olympic festival, in which the athletes of all nations meet to try their mettle.

But the Greek physical forms, however charming and harmonious, do not altogether agree with modern conditions. Our physical culture is more complete and scientific than theirs. We are greater adepts at the modification of limb and muscle, in order to produce certain desirable results. And the bodies of modern athletes, at all events in the Northern countries, are leaner, more sinewy, more highly specialized, than the ideal forms of Greece. Thus it is not only satisfactory, but it is very delightful, to

find that there is an existing school of sculpture, which has made it a business to give us not merely copies of individuals, but types formed by the comparison of many athletes; types as admirable in their way as those bequeathed to us by Polycleitus and Lysippus, and by Michelangelo, who beyond all his contemporaries carried on the line of Greek athletic art. This school of sculptors is most successful in America. It has a good future before it; and though not intimately Christian, it is not in the least inconsistent with the Christian spirit. St. Paul himself was struck with admiration for the Greek athlete, who was temperate in all things, and kept his body under strict control. And we had in the last century a school of "muscular Christianity" which tried to give a manly and chivalrous turn to the churchmanship of the day.

I do not know whether there exists a parallel tendency in modern sculpture to form, from many examples, types of women also in the light of physical culture and of health. We have a persistent admiration for noble Greek types of women, especially for the Venus of Melos, who has been almost canonized. And some of these types are exquisite. Yet I think that if the modern ideal of woman were worked out by those who have scientific knowledge and at the same time have a high ideal of beauty and health, something less fleshly but equally graceful might

result. Of the Venus of Melos it may fairly be said that most of those who worship her do so rather ignorantly. And Greek sculpture does not represent nude women, as it does nude men, in a great variety of attitudes and of actions, so that it helps us less.

At the present time there could be no nobler task for any school of sculpture than to represent, through the study of individual figures, female forms in the highest bloom of health and vitality; not from the sensual nor the athletic point of view, but really womanly types, *mens sana in corpore sano!* Our newspapers and fashion plates are doing all they can to implant and encourage among us a wretchedly perverted idea of the physical beauty of women. They commonly represent mere rags of women, breastless and sexless. Some readers may smile at the notion of taking seriously these wretched caricatures. But they exist and must have wide influence: it is more than probable that through constantly having such pictures under their eyes young women and even young men are necessarily influenced by them, and their taste becomes morbid and deranged. Thus it comes about that the taste of young men is perverted until they look among their female companions for the type which the pictures represent as smart and up to date. And so "the sickly forms that err from honest nature's rule" come into favour in the world, to the

great danger and lasting injury of the coming generations.

Medical reports have of late shown us what a pressing danger to all civilized countries lies in physical degeneracy. The proportion of physically unsatisfactory children in our schools is matched by the great proportion of the physically inadequate for military service among our young men, and the great and growing inadequacy for child-birth among our young women. An art which believed in God and man, in robust and efficient vitality in both sexes, could do much to stem the downward course.

One of the lines of action arising out of a keen sense of physical degeneracy in the people is that taken by the Eugenists, who wish to rouse public opinion, and through public opinion the legislatures, to the necessity of staying by some means or other the downward course. Both in England and in America Eugenists are very active with lectures and with literature. They have had some little success in Parliament, as in the law for the segregation of the mentally defective. They have a considerable influence on the teaching in schools. In some of the States of America they go further. At present they do not usually go much further than trying to curb the propagation of the unfit. But this is evidently only the beginning of political or united action with the object of improving the breeds of men, as the breeds of

domestic animals are improved, by control of the sexual relations.

Though the Eugenists are very much in earnest, and have many scientific facts on their side, it is very doubtful whether under the existing conditions they can do much. Modern men are keenly sensitive to any encroachment on their liberty; and public feeling would bitterly resent hardships inflicted on individuals, even if for the general good. Nor are the laws of human heredity as yet at all clearly ascertained. Let any man consider his friends and their children: he will find that matchings of man and woman produce the most unforeseen and irregular results. A committee of the wisest physicians in the land would soon come to unsurmountable difficulties, if they were entrusted with the duty of joining suitable men and women in matrimony. Even if such a committee were appointed with arbitrary powers —a thing quite impossible—the results, good and bad, of their selections would not appear for many generations; and would be crossed by all sorts of tendencies which no physician could foresee.

Arbitrary legal attempts to improve the breeds of mankind are doomed to failure. But there is infinitely more hope in serious efforts to raise the ideal standard, to persuade men and women not to think so much in marriage of worldly advantage or of personal preference,

and to think more of health, of good physique as distinct from what is called prettiness, of the probable inheritance of the children, not in wealth, but in energy and character. This has no doubt become more difficult as choice in matrimony has become a more individual thing, instead of being the function of parents and advisers. It would certainly be immensely stimulated by the acceptance of fine artistic ideals such as I have suggested.

The weakness of Eugenists, as in the case of so many who have schemes for the bettering of the world, is that they do not realize that life develops from within. They try to work on mankind from the outside by mechanical means; but the bodies of men are but the outward manifestation of the life within. Of course I do not mean that a healthy spirit, in harmony with itself, with God and nature, will so far dominate what is without as to produce a healthy body to dwell in. But at all events it will become part of a stream of tendency flowing in the direction of health, of moderation, and of good sense. A man may be a slave to his surroundings, or he may be their master.

The extravagances in modern French art, which to ordinary people seem so unaccountable, may be only outbursts of the spirit of humanism, which revolts against what is mechanical and what is materialist in its surroundings, and

is determined to assert itself. Artists are determined to break away from what they call merely representative art, to discover the human element in the appreciation of nature, to be spirits and not a mere part of the material world. If they work without moral principles and without religious beliefs, they remain anarchic and only achieve a brief notoriety. But they, or at all events those of them who are genuine, refuse to work merely for money, or to produce facile examples on popular themes. Some are certainly real enthusiasts, who fail to find in the world around them principles of art which appeal to them, and so rush wildly into the void, determined rather to fail by following what they really honour, than to succeed by following with the crowd.

But these aberrations are not in the line of the best humanism. In every period since the Middle Ages, the influence of true humanism has been in the direction of moderation, of sanity, of ideal beauty. In the last century most countries produced humanists of great force and influence. In Germany the greatest of them was Goethe. In England we have had men of lesser stature, but standing for the same ideals, J. A. Symonds, Matthew Arnold and many others. Education in England has been based upon the Bible and the Classics, and wherever that is the case the intrinsic force and charm of Greek literature will always produce writers of classical

type. There has been hardly any of our great poets and prose-writers who was not founded on the Bible and the Classics.

In recent years there has come a reaction, and both the Bible and Greek writers have been in a great measure dethroned. But nothing has been found worthy to take their place. The anti-clerical government of France in recent years has searched and made experiments with the hope of finding a substitute, and has failed. In America there is a strong movement, of which President Coolidge is a supporter, for a return to Classical Education.

However, our subject is narrower—not the Classics in education and life, but Classical or Humanist influence in the arts of representation.

Most people have too narrow a view of Greek art, because they know little of the development which it underwent in the later or Hellenistic age. We may fairly allow that in its earlier and ideal stage it had somewhat narrow limitations. It avoided such subjects as bodies worn out by toil or emaciated by physical hardship. In later times it treated such subjects with remarkable success, elderly fishermen with bodies roughened and hardened by exposure to wind and weather, old women shrunken and worn by years of hard living and penury. It came to see that such bodies, though they had not the beauty of youth and symmetry, had yet a

certain dignity and appropriateness coming from toil and the constant strife of life. It could idealize even the homely and commonplace.

Christianity naturally carries this tendency further, and finds in the spiritual ascetic, and the nun who has renounced in the interests of the higher life the finest functions of her sex, subjects for an art full of pathos and a high kind of beauty. St. Paul's teaching of the superiority of the spirit to the flesh, the great principle of Christianity, may find expression ; in a greater degree in painting, in a less degree in sculpture, which, as a harder and more literal art, is less well adapted to the depiction of what is lacking in fine form. In the niches of a Gothic front, or in the dim religious light of the interior of a Cathedral, such sculptures may be well in harmony with their surroundings. But in public places and in art galleries they seem less appropriate, especially in an age, which, whether rightly or wrongly, is disposed to quarrel with asceticism. In essence, as I have already observed, art is the expression of the fullness of life, while asceticism represents disgust with life. For example, in representing St. Francis, sculpture will be much better satisfied to embody the joyous side of his character, his delight in natural scenes, in birds and animals, than his side of renunciation, or the complete breakdown of his physical frame, as he advanced in years. Painting is much less

narrowly limited by material conditions than sculpture; and so painting may fairly take as subjects forms which in marble or bronze would be unpleasant.

But there is another great tendency running through modern art besides that called classical, which has its fountain-head in Greece. This is the tendency generally summed up in the term *romantic* or baroque. But the word romantic is unfortunate, since the tendency has little to do with Rome, but really owes its origin to the character of the races which overthrew the Roman Empire, especially the Teutons and the Celts. Originating in the seas and forests of Northern Europe, it maintained itself in a semi-conscious condition in those parts of Europe which did not come under the Roman dominion, and gradually made its way, after the conversion to Christianity, into Gothic art, most notably into architecture, producing monuments of undying splendour, on which we still gaze with wonder. The influence which inspired Gothic architecture naturally dominated in a measure the sculpture and the painting which belonged to the churches. At the Renaissance it struggled in representative art with the revived classic influence, and when worsted in Italy, found a refuge in northern countries, Germany and Flanders and Normandy. It is commonly thought of as Christian, as opposed to the paganism of the classicizing art of the

south. But in fact both classic and Gothic art had roots in pagan belief, and both received in time a baptism into Christianity.

Some systematic writers on art have seen the key to the modern history of painting and sculpture in the mutual influences and the clashing of the classic and romantic tendencies.[1] That explanation is far too simple ! There are in modern art many other forces which have to be considered, such as the influence of the art of Japan, and especially the growth of science and our wider acquaintance with the world. But roughly speaking, on the classic side in art are form, balance and measure, and generally what belongs to the intellect, on the romantic side are colour, chiaroscuro, vagueness and all that appertains to the emotional side of man.

England, though less appreciative of art than some other countries, has yet, in the character of our people and the principles of our education, some advantage for the understanding of its main tendencies. Our education, as I have already observed, has been based upon the Bible and the classical writers. But it has not been by any means so purely intellectual as education in Germany and France. Besides cultivating the intelligence it has always been directed towards the formation of moral character, and especially in the nineteenth century

[1] Such writers as Wölfflin in Germany, Baudelaire in France, Phillipps in England.

the ideal of morality in our schools has comprised manliness, courage, loyalty to friends, fairness to foes, compassion for the weak and sympathy with the unfortunate, virtues which marked the best of the Teutonic and Frankish knights of the Middle Ages, and are beyond value in an age of dissolving morality. The knightly ideal is accepted not only in our public schools and universities, but everywhere where any ideals are to be found, notably among the Fascists of Italy.

It may seem that knightly and gentlemanly ideals in conduct are very remotely connected with Gothic tendencies in art: but the distance is not so great as it seems. The ideals of life find a necessary and constant embodiment in literature, especially the literature of imagination. And the action and interaction between literature and art is a perpetual and ever present process. The poems of Tennyson, to take an obvious example, are closely related on the one side to the educational ideas of Thomas Arnold, and on the other side to the paintings of the pre-Raphaelite school. Rossetti and William Morris were both poets and artists, and these two sides of their activity were scarcely to be separated.

If then the word religion be taken in a broad sense as covering all the relations between man and that which is above man, the faculty of ideals and the tendency to progress, it must be

allowed that in past times and even at the present time there are close and constant relations between humanism and humanist art on the one side and art as the expression of religious feeling on the other. Of art which is specifically Christian I shall treat in future chapters.

At the opposite extreme of modern society to aristocracy and chivalry is the tendency in some schools to idealize the life of the humble workers in the country and in cities, or rather to discern and represent what in that life is in a higher sense noble, what belongs to our best humanity, to dwell on the value of man as man, and the dignity of daily work. Some modern, and especially French, painters have dwelt among the people, entered into their joys and sorrows, their labour and sadness; and while not disguising its external roughness, have shown in it an underlying dignity and goodness, and even a beauty to be discerned by insight. One naturally thinks in the first place of the French painter, Millet, and the school of Barbizon. Just as Constable and Crome showed how real beauty is to be found in the most commonplace landscape, if one looks at it with sympathy and friendship, so the painters of peasant life threw a glamour over the daily life of tillers of the soil, and shewed how in reality it exhibits a beauty parallel to, and indeed closely related to, the charm of simple nature. The Dutch painters had represented the life of boors

and peasants in hard naturalism, unsoftened by a mixture of higher feeling. But Millet, out of similar materials, produced paintings which stir human and religious feelings. These paintings, representing the ideal side of the life of the country, are parallel to the poems of Wordsworth and the idylls of many of our English writers; for in England literature is far more readily responsive than art to the working of religious ideas. But some of our painters, especially Mason and Walker, have produced works somewhat resembling those of Millet, but with a keener sense of beauty, and perhaps showing a less strong attachment to the soil, which attachment indeed is most strongly developed among the peasant proprietors of France and Italy.

To idealize in such a way the life of industrial workers in the great manufactories would be a harder task, for where machines predominate they are potent to make the life of those who attend to them mechanical also. Probably where romance and emotion enters into the life of factory workers it comes by the way of home life, and is usually either of an amatory or a religious character.

CHAPTER VII

MYSTICISM AND SYMBOLISM IN ART

RELIGIOUS art, that is to say representative religious art, may be of value to historic religions in three ways : (1) as iconic, producing pictures or statues of the deities and saints of the religion of such a kind as to enhance or to direct the veneration of them ; (2) as narrative, embodying in wall-painting, or sculptured relief or stained windows, representations of the deeds of founders, or events in the history of the faith. Whether such events were historic or only quasi-historic, that is mythologic, is of course from some points of view very important, but not in a purely artistic light ; (3) as symbolic, placing before the eyes of the faithful representations which have a meaning other than, and higher than, an indifferent spectator would discover ; embodying truths of the faith in a hidden way, which only those can discover who are in a degree like-minded with the artist.

In early Christian art, as we shall see in a later chapter, these three kinds of embodiments of religious belief are not kept apart, but mingled. The narrative element is decidedly

predominant: scenes from Old Testament and New Testament history are the usual subjects. But they were not taken in a purely historic light; indeed, at the time the critical historic spirit was non-existent. They became emblems more or less arbitrary of the teaching of the Church and the hopes of the Christians. Of the Founder of the religion and his Mother there are at that period no really interesting representations.

The way in which the religions usually try to express those of their tenets which cannot be directly embodied in visible form is the way of symbolism. In some provinces of religious art symbolism takes a great place. Of course its primary purpose is to impress certain truths, or what are supposed to be truths, on the beholder. But if we turn from the matter to the form, we shall find that symbolic art also may seek for and appreciate beauty; or may, at the other extreme, be at a very low artistic level.

It is evident that in speaking of symbolism, which has been the subject of many learned treatises, from Creuzer's *Symbolik* onwards, I must closely limit my field. I shall not treat of symbolic actions or rites, which abound in all religions; but only of symbolism in art, and in particular in representative art.

Symbolism in religion is closely related to, and perhaps derived from, sympathetic magic,

one of the most universal and primitive of the tendencies of the human mind. Phenomena which happen together, or which closely resemble one another, are apt to be bound together by a religious or quasi-religious bond; the sun and gold or a chariot; the moon and childbirth; winds and wings; rain and sprinkling. Especially in Oriental religion symbolism has run riot. In a somewhat crude form, it pervades early Oriental art from its origin in Babylon and Susa to the highly developed productions of the Persian empire. On the cylinders of Babylon the strength of a deity is represented by adding a lion's head to a human body; the swiftness of a deity is represented by giving wings to his form, wings not meant to fly with, but rather to imply the rapidity with which he works. He often holds in his hands vanquished lions or stags, to signify his power over the animal world; he wields the axe or the thunderbolt as supreme in the sky, and guiding the storm-clouds. But in Assyrian and Egyptian art these symbols are mere additions to an ordinary human form: there is no attempt to make the human form itself distinctive of the character of the deity.

It is the eternal merit of the Greeks to have humanized religious art, to have turned it from symbolism in the direction of anthropomorphism. Aristotle observes that a work of art should be not a symbol but a representation;

and this principle worked in the unconscious level of the minds of Greek artists. In the earlier stages of Greek art we find remains of the primitive symbolism. Zeus is mainly distinguished by carrying the thunderbolt, Hermes the herald's staff, Apollo the lyre, and so forth. But as Greek art grew towards maturity it reduced this conventional and inartistic symbolism.

"It is true that the deities to the last, especially in their formal cultus images, retained attributes indicating their special provinces or functions; Zeus as master of the sky carrying the thunderbolt, Apollo as god of music the lyre, Artemis the bow, and the like. Wings were still added in some cases: placed on the feet of Hermes they indicated his agility; placed on the shoulders of Eros they reminded men of the fleeting character of love. But these attributes were little more than survivals; in the meantime the Greek artists had discovered a more excellent way for indicating the character and functions of the deities. The later fashion was to incorporate in the human figures of the gods their character. The type of Zeus, the father of gods and men, was derived from that of the Greek citizen-father; only in his fatherhood there is something more than human. The type of Apollo and of Hermes is that of the young athlete, in all the glory of perfect symmetry and agile force; only the face is not that of an ordinary athlete." [1]

In the end, Greek art in the hands of Praxiteles and his contemporaries overdid the humanizing of the types of the gods, represented them no longer as super-men and super-women, but as ordinary and even frivolous human beings, in

[1] Gardner, *Principles of Greek Art*, p. 92.

such figures as the Hermes and the Aphrodite of Praxiteles.

In the more refined forms of religion, the pantheism of the Brahmins of India, the prophetic religion of Israel, the higher forms of Mohammedanism, the use of symbols is much less prominent. Indeed, the Jews and the Mohammedans have been so obsessed by the fear of idolatry that they have abstained from representative art altogether.

But idolatry is at a much higher level than mere fetishism. In fetishism supernatural powers are attributed to any object of unusual or striking character, a stone, a tree, an animal, in which supernatural power is supposed to dwell. Fetishism has no relation to art: the fetish would have its sacredness impaired if it were interfered with by the hand of the artist. But in idolatry the worship is given to objects moulded by the hand of man; and the love of beauty which is the privilege of some races tends, when once the deities are represented in human form, ever to improve and refine that form. So idolatry becomes the fruitful mother of art.

In Christian history all three of the tendencies which I have mentioned are prevalent. The veneration of relics, holy water and the like, is a survival of fetishism. A certain degree of idolatry has necessarily accompanied among the less instructed the use of religious images.

But against such idolatry there constantly arose a protest from the teachers, usually the most spiritually minded of their time, who clung to the Hebrew tradition, and regarded the veneration of images as a danger to be protested against.

Early Christian art passed through the symbolic stage. In the paintings of the Catacombs and on the early Christian sarcophagi there is a great deal of pure symbolism: the shepherd with his sheep is a type of Christ; the peacock is the emblem of immortality, because its flesh was supposed to be exempt from decay. The figures of prophets and apostles are but little varied to express the individual portrayed. They merely serve to tell a story; they are little better than picture-writing. And in the Middle Ages, the figures of Saints and Martyrs were distinguished rather by the instruments of their execution which they bore, than by any inward indication: St. Catharine appearing by the toothed wheel, St. Laurence carrying the gridiron, St. Sebastian being pierced with arrows, and the like. It was not until the early Renaissance that really characteristic figures of Apostles and Saints make their appearance, and humanism triumphs over symbolism.

But obviously symbolism, a merely mechanical way of indicating religious fact or doctrine, a sort of civilized picture-writing, is not really mystic art. It appeals more to the head than

the heart. But the real art of mysticism appeals to the feelings rather than the intelligence.

In an interesting recent work [1] Mr. March Phillipps develops the theme that in painting form is intellectual and colour emotional. Stated thus baldly, the theme may be considered a truism; but Mr. Phillipps works it out in much detail, contrasting the painters of Florence, who carried on the classical tradition of laying the emphasis on form, with the painters of Venice who were influenced more by the East, and used colour and especially chiaroscuro with marvellous effect. Form appeals more to those who appreciate the legacy of Greek art, with its clearness, its sobriety, its dislike of unbounded emotion. Colour much more impresses those whose minds are less orderly and their emotions keener. It was natural that when Europe was divided into Catholic and Protestant camps, the religion of the Protestants should have more affinity with the schools of form, and the religion of the Catholics find expression in schools of colour. The danger which besets the former tendency is a critical and negative spirit, leading to a hard intellectualism. The danger which besets the latter is a weak and unrestrained emotionalism. So to the Protestant mind the schools of art which were favoured by the Papal reaction and the Jesuit fervour are distasteful, though one

[1] *Form and Colour*, Ed. 2: 1925.

has to recognize their great influence in the world.

We must, however, distinguish between feeling and sentiment or emotion. Feeling in man is the most fundamental of all things ; it is prior to thought and largely directs thought. But sentiment is an unstable thing, which is liable to the greatest aberrations. It cannot be trusted as a guide of life, though it greatly influences the pleasure of life. Feeling is an Anglo-Saxon word ; sentiment a French word ; and the two words take the colour of the two nationalities. When a man says, " I feel a duty in the matter," we are near the springs of character and the whole being. When he says, " I have a sentiment in regard to the matter," we are near the surface. Thus for practical life feeling is of unmeasured importance : sentiment is a decoration of life, which affects its happiness rather than its direction.

Thus the mysticism which has a hold on the deep sources of human life, and thence draws inspiration and energy, is strongly to be distinguished from the mysticism which evaporates in sentiment. Yet both kinds stand in a closer relation to colour and chiaroscuro in art than to the art of clearly defined forms.

Mysticism is a sort of protoplasm of all religions, beginning with the vague feelings of adoration and awe which come upon men in the presence of God. We have already seen that

a kind of mysticism inspires much of modern landscape painting. But landscape painting is not the only field in which it works. Sometimes it finds a clearer expression in art which is more definitely and purposefully mystic. I must first speak of mysticism in art as appealing to individuals, and then speak of it as affecting groups of men, societies or churches or countries.

The mysticism of individuals is scarcely a thing which can be submitted to criticism. It arises in the depths of the heart in a thousand forms, which often have no relation to logic or philosophy, but which are to the individual of infinite value, and often save him from pessimism, from vice and from ruin. To such an inner inspiration most naturally apply the immortal words of the Fourth Evangelist: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth."

If this personal mysticism finds an external and articulate utterance, it will often be in poetry, poetry written not primarily to appeal to others, but written as an overflowing of personal feeling. Here and there it may reach and touch a kindred spirit, as when two harps are set side by side the striking of a particular note in one will cause the corresponding string of the other to vibrate. Or, if it be less capable of self-expression, it will dwell upon particular passages of Scripture, or particular works of the

great Christian mystics, and build them into the foundations of life. In the lives of the great teachers of Christianity, we often read of such appropriation of the deep sayings of others, which are often accepted in a sense quite different from that in which they were intended by their authors. Obvious examples are the appeal made to the spirit of Augustine by the words which he heard one day, *tolle*, *lege*, and the personal appropriation by Luther of the Pauline phrase "The just shall live by his faith." All through religious history we find examples of such appropriation by religious leaders of words and phrases taken out of their connection, and treated as a revelation direct from God.

Parallel to the personal acceptance of words of Scripture is the appropriation of the productions of art. Some work of a great musician may have on a man appreciative of music an influence like that which the harp of David had on the storm-tossed spirit of Saul, and be the beginning of a change in feeling and character.

In the same way a mystical spirit may find in a painting on which he lights a hidden and beautiful meaning, an expression of spiritual exaltation or hope. The technical quality of the picture will not matter much, the occasion of its production or the purpose which the artist had in making it is little relevant. In it the

modern Christian may see a reflection of phases of his own inner experience, and recognize in the painter a kindred spirit, who has felt the feelings and been stirred by the thoughts which belong to his own spiritual experience. And, if the admirer be also a painter himself, he will probably try to give a visible shape to his inward belief or aspiration in works not intended for the public eye, but reserved for near friends.

It is clear that when we consider works of this personal and intimate character, criticism is out of place. Such works are justified, not because of their truth or beauty, although of course they may have these qualities, but by their relation to the inner and the higher life. The religious element in them is so great, that other elements need scarcely be taken into consideration.

Sculpture and painting which reflect the religious experience, not of individuals but of societies and churches, offer a little more scope to criticism. In Roman days the chapels of Mithras and of Isis were full of representations, of small value as works of art, but a regular accompaniment of the services, as to which we know very little, which were carried on in those chapels. The remains of Mithraic caves exist in abundance in the north of Europe, and the sculpture in them represents scenes of allegorical meaning: Mithras slaying a bull,

his birth in a rocky cave, his mounting of the chariot of the Sun, or feasting with him, his shooting with the bow, or cutting leaves and fruit from a tree. These reliefs we very imperfectly understand, in the absence of Mithraic religious literature. Parallel to the Mithræa were the underground chambers where the early Christians met for religious services, the walls of which were covered with scenes, mainly taken from the Old and New Testaments, but used with a transfigured and mystic meaning. These scenes we, having an abundant early Christian literature, can interpret with more success. Poor as they are from the point of view of art, they are very interesting as throwing light on early Christian belief. Such painting, always interpreted in a symbolic and allegoric fashion, went on through the history of Christianity to the Renaissance. Two art forms especially—the crucified Saviour, and the Mother with her divine Son—became dear to the inmost heart of Christianity; and in the cities of the Middle Ages to such figures were in many places attributed miraculous powers of healing and helping.

But there is a deep meaning in the saying of Goethe, that miracle-working pictures are generally wretched works of art. The supernatural virtue in them has no relation whatever to their artistic excellence. They are icons or talismans; their value depends entirely on religious

belief, and criticism has to turn away from them, completely baffled.

During the Renaissance, and in succeeding ages, one may fairly say that the mystic value of paintings and statues and their artistic merit are usually in inverse proportion to one another. The more the Greek sense of beauty has dominated an artist or a school, the less it is acceptable to the spirit of the old catholicism. And conversely, the works of sculpture and painting which appeal most to that particular type of Christianity are works which are lacking in the great qualities of art.

But religious art cannot be of a lofty and noble character unless it in some measure satisfies both sight and spirit, at once pleases the eyes and stimulates the faculty of adoration. When the compelling power of a religion is fresh, the votaries will care far more for the meaning of a representation and for its stimulating power than for its artistic charm. But when the power of the religion is waning, it is the beauty of its monuments which still attracts men. Like poetry, representative art is often the ghost of dead religion.

In England ordinary or uncultivated people know very little about art as such, and might well prefer, and in fact often do prefer, a crude and unskilful painting which succeeds in acting upon the emotions to a great work which fails to appeal to the feelings. The situation is

saved by a certain deference which at present the unlearned feel for the more highly trained and intellectual. If the merit of a painting were settled by the perfectly honest and actual feeling of the mass of the people, there is scarcely any depth to which art might not fall.

Religious paintings should be so good in technique, so carefully studied in their rendering of nature and of man, as to pass muster with the critic. But when that essential condition is complied with, their value is to be finally tested by their devotional value, by their power of raising really Christian emotion to a higher level, and infusing a brighter glow into the recognition of the God revealed in the life of the Founder, and the followers who continued that life on earth.

The most characteristic types of religious mysticism in modern English art are Watts and Blake, as to whom we shall have something to say in a later chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VARIETIES OF CHRISTIANITY

I

TO define Christianity is a very hard task. The history, indeed, of Christianity, in its outlines, may be studied in a hundred books better and worse. But what is the essential meaning of Christianity? As to this there are many views. Several writers in recent years have set forth what they regard as the real message of Christ. I will begin with repeating the statement of Professor Harnack, one of the most learned of them. He writes: [1] "Jesus' teaching may be grouped under three heads: firstly, the kingdom of God and its coming; secondly, God the Father, and the infinite value of the human soul; thirdly, the higher righteousness, and the commandment of love."

No doubt other writers, as good Christians though not as learned as Harnack, would vary the formula. It is needless here to repeat their views. What I have really to set forth is the view accepted in the present volume.

[1] *What is Christianity?* p. 51.

Christianity has existed in four successive forms: first, in the teaching of the Founder; second, in the Gospel of the apostolic age, especially in the writings of St. Paul and the Fourth Evangelist; third, in the great Church of the Middle Ages; fourth, in the many churches of the post-Reformation age.

As regards the original teaching, I would accept in the main the statement of Harnack, only altering the order of the clauses. When Jesus Himself was asked what was the essence of His teaching, He replied that it consisted in two great commandments: first, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind; and second, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. In all the three synoptic Gospels, this teaching is set forth in almost identical words. Two points are most noteworthy in it; first, that it puts the love of God far above the love of one's neighbour; and, second, that it is no intellectual formula, but one having immediate reference to practice. Another teaching is so prominent in the discourses of Jesus that it must be put on the same level as love to God and man. That is the doctrine of the divine kingdom; and that the great duty of every man is to take a part in the promotion of that kingdom on earth. These are the main features of the teaching of the Founder.

But in the life of Jesus as it appears in the

Gospels there is another feature, which seems to me more fundamental than even the teaching which I have mentioned. This is a profound and overmastering consciousness of the reality of the life of the spirit, the feeling that God and man alike belong to a spiritual world which lies above and around us ; and that this spiritual world is the only and ultimate existence. At every point, Jesus breaks the visible crust of the experiences of the world, and shows the true life which lies behind it. For the invisible only does he care ; and he regards it as the whole duty of man to take his due place in this world of the spirit. " Fear not them that kill the body." It is out of the heart that come the things which defile a man. Have no thought for the things of the visible life, but only for the things that are eternal. This frame of mind and spirit was so rooted in the Founder that it seemed to block out and exclude merely temporal happenings. And in the way of all intense beliefs it was the motive and end of all His actions. Of knowledge He hardly thought ; but action in the line of God's will, and the intense feeling which cannot but find a vent in action, is of the essence alike of man's goodness and of his happiness.

In the second stage of the history of Christianity the centre of gravity is moved. Though love of God and man is still primary in the teaching, it centres rather in the doctrine of

Christ. The disciples believed with intense fervour that their Master was with them in their missions and in their preaching as a source of spiritual power and energy. They had not any defined views of His person ; indeed, when one looks closely into the records one sees that many views scarcely to be reconciled one with the other prevailed among the apostles and teachers ; but all recognized the continuous working in the Church of the Spirit of God, or of Christ, or of the Spirit of Christ, all of which phrases they used without clear distinction.

In so doing, they did not really depart from the first principles of Christianity. The sublime ethical teaching of Jesus, though of infinite value, and of value for all time, was not the seed of Christianity. Christianity was, in fact, not a set of doctrines, but a life ; the life of Christ, and its working in the world of spirit, and thence on the visible.

Christianity soon began to absorb and to baptize into Christ features taken from other communities, the philosophy of Greece, the mysticism of Asia, the external organization of the cities of the Roman Empire. It grew and expanded like a mustard plant until it overshadowed the civilized world. The accretions were partly good and partly of more doubtful character.

The question for us at present, however, is of the present meaning of Christianity rather

than of its history. We find in the modern European world, and in the Church of England which is a sort of microcosm, reflecting the modern Christian world, two main ways of regarding Christianity, often mingled, but different in essence.

The developed mediæval Church is prominent enough in history, with its organized hierarchy, its classes of bishops, priests and deacons, its formulated creeds, its sacraments, for which it claimed supernatural sanctions and miraculous working. Through the history of Europe the forces of the visible Church were opposing, and often overcoming, those of the State. Rulers, however powerful, had to make terms with it. Its temples and buildings still remain to astonish and delight us. Its festivals and ceremonies were conspicuous in the history of all cities. It dominated art as it dominated society in general. Its power culminated in the Crusades, the most noteworthy events in mediæval history, and the most important in their consequences for good and for evil.

In the Latin countries of Europe, Italy, Spain, France, the great organization which centred in Rome, though it has but a shadow of its former power, retains its form and its methods, its creeds and its miraculous sacraments, and maintains incessant war against freedom of opinion and against the science of history, and struggles—and this is its noblest feature—

against the lowering of the ethical standard which is the natural result of the spread of democracy.

But in the north of Europe since the Reformation conditions are entirely changed. There are in some countries State Churches: but beside them there have grown up a multitude of free religious societies which usually profess to go back to Christian origins, and to restore to a decadent Christianity the spirit of the Founder. As the organization of all these bodies, State Churches and dissenting communions, is far less rigid than that of the Roman Church, it has become impossible to draw clear lines of separation between Christian and non-Christian, between the Church and the world. The only unity which at present exists among Christians in England, Germany and America is a spiritual unity, inasmuch as all alike profess to abide by the teaching of the Founder, and regard the Spirit of Christ as still working in them, though in diverse ways.

Christianity may be regarded from the inward and individual point of view, as concerned with the relations between the human soul and God, as interpreted by the Founder. In all ages of the religion, men and women who cared for the higher life and were not absorbed in the daily work and troubles of existence have had going on within them a history of struggle against sin and divine aid afforded them in the

struggle, of religious yearnings and aspirations, which has been to them the most precious of experiences, the tragedy or triumph of the spirit.

Yet every body of Christians, however slight be the ties which bind it together, must have some visible and outward rites. It will have services and festivals, recognized forms of worship and stated places for worship. It has been well observed that even among the Quakers, who are of all Christian bodies most averse to ritual, there are still some religious forms. To keep one's hat on in a place of worship is a bit of ritual: and in fact, among the Jews and Mohammedans, it is an essential part of some services to keep one's head-covering. And wherever there are externals of worship, the possibility of art comes in.

But in the first two of the stages of Christianity of which I have spoken small place was left for art. Christianity, like Islam, arose among a society in which the plastic and mimetic arts were proscribed as irreligious. Even in the post-Apostolic days, as we see from the paintings of the Roman Catacombs, there was no sense of art, if art be held to be dependent on a sense of beauty: for the representations on the walls of those labyrinths are merely didactic and symbolic, and show little sense of composition and no originality. It was not until about A.D. 1000 that any striving after beauty entered into the art of the Christian nations of Europe.

But it is not only from the historic point of view, in its successive forms in the European world, that Christian art has to be considered, but also in its psychological and analytical aspects. There have in every age been struggling in the Church a variety of principles or impulses, the ascetic impulse and the impulse of enjoyment, the mystic element and the element of naturalism, the ecclesiastical tendency and the impulse of individualism. And these have not succeeded one another in time, but have been mingled in various proportions, now one and now another rising to the surface and becoming predominant.

Christianity may affect representative art in three ways:

(1) As the expression of essential religion, of the relation of God to man and to the world of nature. Of this essential religion there is of course something in all the great religions, in Islam and Buddhism as well as in Christianity, and the Judaism of which it is the crown. But Islam and Judaism, in their fear of idolatry, have proscribed all art but such as is merely decorative. In Buddhist art, and especially in the figure of Buddha himself, there may be something of essential religion; but it is so remote from European civilization that I need not speak of it; nor of the early Chinese painting in which some students have discovered a religious element.

(2) As contained in the early documents of the Christian religion, the life and death of the Founder. This is of course an influence acting only on Christian art, but acting on all art which professes to be Christian.

(3) As embodied in the Christian Church of all ages. This we may call mixed, as contrasted with pure Christianity. The Church in its expansion became greatly modified by the accretion of elements of all kinds, good and bad, and for all it found some expression in its art. Much of the art of the Church had little relation to primitive Christianity; some was suited only to particular countries or particular developments of doctrine; some was morbid and unhealthy; some was frankly idolatrous. The various schools or branches into which the Christian Church is now divided must necessarily each approve of some of these developments and disapprove of others.

It is clear that the art of countries which still adhere to the Roman Church will, so far as it is religious, greatly differ from that of Protestant countries, so far as it also is religious. The light in which the Founder of Christianity, His Mother, the Saints, are regarded in the Roman Church of the present day, does not greatly differ from the light in which they were regarded in the Middle Ages. The art of ancient Italian and Gothic Churches still appeals to the worshippers. But Protestants, however keenly they

may be alive to the charms and beauties of mediæval art, yet appreciate it rather from the historical and æsthetic point of view. Much of it, especially that related to the recognized saints of Catholicism, and the future life, does not appeal to them as religious. The great features of early Christian history, the birth of the Founder, His life of beneficence and of teaching, His death on the cross and His heavenly exaltation profoundly interest Catholic and Protestant alike, although among Protestants there is a strong and growing tendency to turn from the miraculous side of these events to their spiritual meaning and present value. The Acts of the Apostles also are recognized and dwelt on by all branches of the Church. But the art of the Middle Ages is largely concerned with the stories recorded in the Apocryphal Gospels, with the legends in regard to the Virgin Mary, with the lives of the saints, with the last judgment, all of which subjects are of constant occurrence. But these events are for the most part now relegated by the growth of historic study to the realm of myth and fancy. The modern scale of virtues also is quite different from the mediæval. Virginity, for example, was in mediæval times regarded as a superior condition to marriage, a view not now held in any school of reasoned ethics. Thus we English are out of tune with mediæval painting and sculpture. And it is

felt in Catholic countries that mediæval art does not admit of further development and progress; when the line is continued it leads only to decadence and frigidity. It is, as I have already pointed out in my introductory chapter, a mistake to suppose that there is a deeper cleavage between Christianity and modern art in predominantly Protestant than in predominantly Catholic countries. Writers in the Roman Church bewail that cleavage quite as mournfully as do English and German writers. Wherever Christianity takes an ascetic form it turns away from art. But wherever it is combined with appreciation and love of nature it feels the need of art. There is a general opinion that the more Modernist forms of Christianity are opposed to Christian art. And no doubt many of the art developments of the Middle Ages rouse their hostility. But whether a modern Christian art is possible is the question to which the present volume is mainly devoted.

CHAPTER IX

GRÆCO-ROMAN CHRISTIAN ART

I PROPOSE to sketch in briefest outline the history of Christian art down to modern times. Of course it can be only an aeroplane view: any detail would throw the whole out of perspective. And it must be a sketch from a particular point of view, that of the writer. It is, in fact, put in to form a sort of connecting link between the general statements set forth in earlier chapters and the hints as to modern Christian art with which I conclude.

Worthy religious art must be worthy both on the side of religion and on the side of beauty. However expressive it be, if it does not aim at the beautiful, it becomes inartistic. It is from this point of view that I shall speak of the art of Christianity. It might be possible to throw aside all ideals and to treat the history of Christian art from a purely external point of view, just as it might be possible to sketch the history of morals without suggesting what in conduct is good and what bad. But such a treatment would be not only without interest

but without humanity. It is precisely the human element, the element of idealism, that gives meaning to history.

I

To repeat the summary set forth at the beginning of Chapter VII, there are three ways in which graphic and plastic art can be of service to definite religions.

(1) By representations of the Deities or Saints of the religion. In the case of pagan religions, the figures will be of Gods and Heroes. In the case of the historic religions they will be of Founders and Saints. I am speaking of detached figures in sculpture or painting. Egypt and Greece have bequeathed to us a great gallery of divine or heroic figures, the Egyptian deities symbolic in type, the Greek purely humanist. Of the four great historic religions —the Jewish, the Mohammedan, the Buddhist and the Christian,—the former two proudly disdain any such representations : the Buddhists and the Christians have in every age, save the very earliest, accepted them.

(2) By representations of mythic or historic events in which the deities or heroes of the religion have played a prominent part. This is the work of painting or sculptural relief; it may be called narrative art.

(3) By representations of a mystic or symbolic character, in which an attempt is made directly

to embody doctrine or belief, to stimulate feelings of piety and to inspire conduct.

The polytheism of the ancient world we may set aside. In its day it produced a superb development of art; but at present it has no influence on religion, it is potent only as poetry, which is the ghost of dead religion. The two great religions of the non-Semitic world, Buddhism and Christianity, show us many parallel developments in art as in history and doctrine. In both religions the idealized figures of the Founder and his most prominent followers take a prominent place. In both, narrative representations of the deeds of the Founder and of notable events in the history of the society are frequent. And in both religions many attempts have been made to give graphic representations of doctrine, of hope and of fear, in which the ideas of the religion took form. Although in their intimate character, Buddhism and Christianity, the religion of despair and the religion of hope, are strongly opposed one to the other, yet they constitute a group as opposed to the severe monotheism of the Semites. In their history they offer striking analogies to one another which have been well pointed out by Dr. Estlin Carpenter, who was equally at home in the early literature of both religions. The parallelism in their art is noteworthy. The art of both springs out of the Hellenistic world-art of the age after Alexander the Great.

Alike in Buddhist and in Christian art the life of the Founder embroidered with legend is one of the earliest and most usual subjects, and the saints of the religion cluster about him. But to develop this parallel would lead me away from my present purpose. Buddhist art is another subject.

As the Christian religion came to birth in a Jewish Society, there could be in its earliest stages little sympathy for art. Of Jesus and His apostles there are no authentic portraits. In the Synoptic Gospels the only art work spoken of with any admiration is the temple of Herod, which was certainly one of the most magnificent structures of antiquity. In relation to that we have the memorable witness: "We heard Jesus say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." [1] And we can scarcely be surprised at this if we consider the essential inwardness of the Gospel of Jesus. It is quite natural that the Evangelists, who very imperfectly understood the mind of their Master, should have interpreted the saying in an unsatisfactory way. They regarded it as something to be explained away, as something which, on the face of it, to some extent justified the Jewish judges. Matthew and Mark add, in identical phrase: "And not even so did their witnesses agree together." The Fourth Evan-

[1] Mark xiv. 58.

gelist does not thus take refuge in the inconsistency of the witnesses, but accepting the phrase as a genuine saying of Jesus, adds, " But he spake of the temple of His body," [1] an interpretation which modern criticism will certainly not accept. The saying is in line with a multitude of utterances in the Fourth Gospel, which imply the passing away of ritual and outward observance, and the rise of a purely spiritual and inward religion.

On the other hand the love of, and delight in, all that is most charming in nature is prominent in the Gospels, especially the part of them which records the early Galilæan days of the preaching of Jesus. Writers on æsthetic have pointed out that the appreciation of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, of the growth of seeds and the tending of sheep, reach a higher level than in any pagan literature of the time. The saying " Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these lilies " shows the finest insight, the most exquisite freshness of spirit. It is out of such appreciation that great art springs. But Christianity soon moved on from the hills and waters of Galilee to the slums of the great cities, and passed out of touch with nature.

Through the whole history of Christianity there has been a struggle between those who regarded the representations of art as tending

[1] John ii. 21.

in a dangerous way towards idolatry, and those of more liberal and humane tendency. Tertullian, as we should have expected, takes the severer view: but that such a view was not usual is proved by existing remains.

II

The earliest extant Christian art is that which we find in the wall-paintings of the Roman Catacombs, which can now be studied in the great work of Monsignor Wilpert more effectively than on the spot in Rome.[1] It sets before us the adoption, the baptism into Christ, not of the great art of painting of the ancient world, but of the art of the common people of Rome, extremely poor in technique, defective in drawing and grouping, infinitely below the level of such paintings of the Roman age as those of Herculaneum and the house of Livia at Rome, but redeemed by close relation to contemporary belief, and tinged, so to speak, with the blood of the Christian martyrs.

The craftsmen who painted these scenes on the walls of the tombs of Christians, and the chapels where they met for worship, were unskilled; at first they may have been pagans, who did not understand the meaning attached

[1] *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, 1903. This is a work of great accuracy, the result of long continued study and the use of all modern appliances.

by the faithful to the scenes portrayed. At the time other secret societies, attached to the worship of Sabazius Mithras and other deities of the Mysteries, caused the production of not dissimilar scenes, and in fact in some cases it is not easy to decide whether a scheme of painting is Christian or not: but in the course of two or three centuries the specifically Christian character of the representations becomes more marked.

At first, as early, according to Dr. Wilpert, as the second century, common Roman funereal subjects are adopted, the significance only being changed. We have scenes of harvesting, or a shepherd keeping his sheep. The sepulchral banquet of the pagans is modified into a representation of the Christian sacred meal. Orpheus playing his lyre among the animals becomes a type of the preaching of Christ. The peacock of Juno becomes a type of immortality, because the flesh of peacocks was supposed to be exempt from decay. The shepherd becomes a memorial of the Good Shepherd, and so on. Representations of the pagan deities are of course avoided: but there is no scruple as to inserting figures of current art which are merely poetical, reclining figures which represent rivers, winged genii; even Cupid and Psyche, and sun and moon in human form.

Soon simple scenes, illustrating tales of the Old or the New Testament, make their appear-

ance: Noah in the ark, Jonah swallowed and thrown up by a sea monster, Susanna and the Elders, the three Jewish boys in the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel in the den of lions. And with these are intermingled scenes from the New Testament, especially from the Fourth Gospel, the raising of Lazarus, the man from the pool of Bethesda carrying his couch, the baptism of Jesus, the denial by Peter, the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and the like. It is impossible here to enter into the very difficult question in what light exactly the early Christians looked on these representations; but it is clear that they did not regard them as mere illustrations of the Bible; rather they looked on them as symbols, considering the return of Jonah from the sea-monster's body as a type of the Resurrection of Christians or of their Lord, Susanna as an emblem of the persecution of the Church, the multiplication of the loaves as a type of the Eucharist.

The paintings of the catacombs, and the Christian sarcophagi which followed in the third and fourth centuries, cannot be regarded as the productions of an art new or essentially Christian. They represent only a Christian species or adaptation of the popular art of the time, having no more claim to be regarded as works of beauty than the sign-boards of our public-houses. There is nothing of originality

in them : they follow slavishly some type which has in the course of time become dominant.

Often they have an odd resemblance to current pagan types and groups. Daniel stands between two lions heraldically arranged, as used to stand in earlier times the figure of Apollo between two griffins or the figure of Artemis between lions or swans. Lazarus as he stands in his tomb, which is more like a shrine, swathed in wrappings, is closely like a mummy or such primitive figures as that of the Asiatic Artemis at Ephesus. The representations of Jonah and his adventures remind us of those of Odysseus. The only figure of decided novelty which we find is that of the *orant* or praying woman, who stands with arms outspread ; it is uncertain whether she stands for a mourner or for the Church. Her attitude is certainly different from that of praying figures on Greek sepulchral reliefs, which stand with one arm only upraised. Noah also, and other male figures stand in the same attitude. Paradise is figured by a meadow with trees and shrubs.

It is much less the figures that were changed than the meaning which they carried. They were less narrative than didactic figures. For a fuller appreciation of their meaning we have to turn to the contemporary literature of the Church, where we find exactly the same personages mentioned in prayers and exhortations.

III

With the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the state by Constantine, Christian architecture and art emerged from the catacombs into the light of day, and set out on their great career. At first the place of them is mainly Rome and Ravenna, the seat of the Byzantine Empire in Italy. There great basilicas were erected which became the place of public worship, and the comparative seclusion of Ravenna in the Middle Ages has preserved to us these buildings in so complete a condition that we turn rather to them than to the churches of Rome and Constantinople for information.

In regard to the mosaics at Rome and Ravenna, I cannot do better than transcribe the words of Professor Baldwin Brown,[1] who greatly admires them, too greatly in my opinion. The churches

"adopt in the main the principle of the world-famous frieze of the Parthenon at Athens, and offer an ideal presentation of actual scenes, of which the building they adorn was the theatre. One of the earliest and quite the finest of the mosaics, that of S. Pudentiana at Rome, is in respect of its main scheme canonical. In the apse of that church the stately form of Christ enthroned as teacher occupies the central position, while on a lower level and on both sides of him sit the twelve apostles. The arrangement transfers to the heavenly sphere the appearance of the apse of the church at service time, when the presiding official

[1] Hastings, *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. I, p. 847.

occupied the throne in the centre behind the altar, with the attendant priests on the stone bench round the curve of the apse on either side of him."

In the church of S. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna, there are depicted on either side processions of saints who advance towards the altar bearing wreaths; above are scenes from the life of Christ; on one side illustrations of His miracles and discourses, on the other of His passion, where all that is painful or humiliating is softened down or omitted.

The intention of the whole decoration is clearly to instruct. To the officials and clergy it would have a symbolic meaning, and illustrate the mysteries of the faith. To the crowds of worshippers it would be a substitute for the study of the Bible, since few of them could read. Pictures are the Bible of the poor.

In the style of these mosaics there is beyond doubt something very stately and lofty. But naturalism, any breath of actuality, is excluded. They are in a world of their own. Their style of convention acted on the art of the Eastern Church so strongly that that church has never really broken away from it. As the religious thought of eastern Europe has never moved on beyond the creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon, which it cherishes with fanatical devotion, so its architecture and art became fixed in the Byzantine age, and indeed, may be said to have been petrified. The good Anglicans, who

long for closer alliance with the Eastern Churches, suffer from much illusion.

It was the new blood of the northern nations, Goth and Frank, Saxon and Lombard, poured into the anæmic body of the later Roman Empire, which prevented such petrifaction in the kingdoms of the West.

The rise and progress of late Roman architecture may be traced in remaining buildings and ruins of all ages. The history of graphic and plastic art, the remains of which are far less solid and durable, may well be followed in the succession of ivory carvings, a succession which runs almost without interruption from Roman times onward. An extensive series of casts of ivories, formed by the late Professor Westwood, may be studied in the South Kensington Museum and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The miniatures in manuscripts also are a long consecutive series, and influenced the greater art of the churches.

In representing the person of the Founder of Christianity, art has had great difficulties to encounter. There are three aspects of His existence which are especially dear and interesting to Christians: the Nativity, the suffering on the cross, and the heavenly exaltation. But in representing the crucifixion artists have to emphasize the suffering and sorrow of the Saviour; and it is impossible to produce any figure which shall be pleasing to look at. The

crucified Christ is the centre of Christianity as ascetic, as the worship of sorrow; and this worship is at the opposite extreme to the joy of life which is the natural and attractive subject of art. No such representation belongs to early Christianity. In early Christian painting Christ appears in the form of the Good Shepherd or Orpheus; in painting and the reliefs of sarcophagi He appears also as teaching or in the company of the apostles, an ordinary figure of no striking beauty. Even in later Roman and Byzantine art, representations of the sufferings of Christ, the trial, the scourging, and the cross, are represented but rarely and with much reticence. Especially in one aspect did the historic Christ offer a field to naturalist and idealizing art, as an infant in the cradle, or in the arms of His mother. But as in the early Oriental church the Mother of Jesus stood almost on the same level of deity as her son, the group of Mother and Child remained conventional; and it was not until Christian art was loosed and expanded at the Renaissance that the group became a study of ideal beauty and charm. The exalted Saviour was often portrayed, but it was a subject to the worthy depiction of which art in the early Christian days was scarcely equal.

The apostles and saints of Christianity, with whom were associated the Jewish prophets and kings of the Old Testament, appear on sarco-

phagi of the later Roman Empire. But it was far beyond the power of the decadent art of the time to create satisfactory sculptural types of the different saints. So they had to be indentified by the attributes which they bore, which served as labels of identification.

Narrative art took up for representation scenes from the Old and New Testaments, from the history of the Virgin, from the apocryphal Gospels, and from the lives of the saints. Since art was without life, these scenes were in a high degree conventional, and the repertory of them was decidedly limited.

The mentality of the Christians of the first centuries naturally regarded the transition from Judaism to Christianity as a process. Especially in the speech of St. Peter at Pentecost and the *Epistle to the Hebrews* we may see how the minds of the earliest disciples were steeped in the history and the ritual of Judaism, and regarded Christianity as a development of it rather than as a new religion. In the Pauline Epistles we see how the apostle passed from Israel according to the flesh to Israel according to the spirit. No wonder that the Jews of his time were indignant with him for giving over to the Gentiles their spiritual patrimony; and modern Jews, even the most liberal of them, are unable entirely to set aside this indignation.

It is a remarkable and very suggestive fact that the Jews owe all the embodiments of their

history and their historic religion to Christian artists. The genius of the Hebrew race turned in another direction than that of representation, towards ethics and theology rather than towards art (other than music); towards the future rather than towards the past. The grand stories of the Old Testament—the Creation, the Flood, the Paschal Feast, the travels in the Wilderness, the deeds of Moses, the actions of David, Elijah, Daniel and other prophets and kings—are familiar to our eyes, not as events in Jewish History, but as antitypes to the events of early Christian history, the Nativity, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the like.

The history of Israel, the calling of Abraham, the rescue out of Egypt, were made into indispensable stones of the Christian construction. The Psalms were so completely appropriated that the great majority of Christians now think of them almost exclusively as belonging to their faith, and they make up a great part of ritual in every branch of the Church. In the same way early Christian art took over, baptized into Christ, the whole of the history of the Old Testament, and for the first time presented it to the world of art. It was but natural, indeed inevitable, that Christians should have in a great degree transposed it. There was no Jewish art to transpose: but they took the history from their own point of view; and represented it in the fashion of contemporary paganism.

It might seem that an art which was jejune in the depiction of scenes of history would be quite out of its depth if it tried to embody ideas and aspirations. But in fact art, which is on the technical side poor, has advantages over that which is more developed, when the problem is to represent what appeals to intellect and imagination rather than to the senses. Being free from the necessity of portraying natural objects as they really are, as well as from the search for what is beautiful, it has licence to work directly on the fancies and imagination of the people. Like the earliest artistic efforts of savages and children, it is a sort of picture-writing, which tries, by working on association of ideas, and the more primitive instincts, to put the spectators into a particular frame of mind. It works by suggestion and by symbol, and turns the mind from the things which can be seen to the things which are unseen, but inwardly felt. Thus the angels and devils, the monsters and nightmares of mediæval art, probably had a powerful effect on the minds and perhaps on the lives of unsophisticated people. But as the knowledge and love of art spread such figures become unpleasant and even repulsive.

Another monumental work of Wilpert, that on the paintings and mosaics of Rome,[1] is of

[1] *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien: IV–XIII Jahrhundert.*

extraordinary value for showing the successive phases of art in the central city of Christendom in the dark ages. The repertory of subjects is greatly increased. In the mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore we have a series of consecutive views of early Jewish history. Events from the lives or the legends of the saints make their appearance, and the Popes, as is natural, frequently appear. The mosaics are by far the most trustworthy monuments: the paintings are very fragmentary, and often repainted, so as to be of little value as evidence. Wilpert's explanations are not wholly to be trusted, as he writes from the Roman point of view; and the Church of Rome is unwilling to admit that Christian doctrine underwent not only development but change.

On the whole one is greatly struck with the poverty of choice of subject. Pious founders are far more in evidence than Christian beliefs. Scenes of the last judgment, and other representations bearing on the hopes and fears of the people are very rare, and belong only to the waning of the dark ages. Of the style in representation little can be said, for the period —fourth to thirteenth centuries—is just the time when art, which has any relation to the sense of beauty, was dormant. Convention was altogether dominant.

I need not further dwell on the art of Byzantium and Ravenna, remarkable as it is from some

points of view, and greatly as it is admired by many critics. It is essentially a petrified art, reaching a high standard in its own way, but destitute of all Christian life. It belongs to a different world from ours. The art of the Eastern Church, held down by Turkish domination and Czarist despotism, has been unable to grow. In saying this, I do not call in question the genuine piety of the peasantry, and the self-devotion of the priests of Eastern Europe, but only point out that their religion has not found characteristic expression in art. The Roman monuments show how technical excellence slowly deteriorated for many centuries, and then began to improve. Their course reminds one of a long tunnel through which one passes in a train. At first the light comes from behind; but as it dies away in the middle of the tunnel a little faint gleam from the front appears and grows stronger moment by moment.

CHAPTER X

GOTHIC CHRISTIAN ART

I

THE transition from an art which was essentially Græco-Roman to the noble Christian art of the Middle Ages took different forms in the East and the West. In the East we have the great controversy as to image-worship which distracted the Byzantine Empire in the eighth and ninth centuries. It was a contest between the austerity which saw in the introduction of images into churches a dangerous and misleading tendency, kindred to idolatry, and which was no doubt strongly influenced by the ideas of the Mohammedans, who have always adhered to the Jewish tradition. The controversy which as it proceeded resulted in a wide-spread destruction by the Iconoclasts of religious images, ended in a compromise by which plastic figures of divine beings and saints were forbidden, but representations in colour or even in relief were tolerated. But after this controversy there was no growth of religious art in the Byzantine Empire, no fresh spring

of pious invention ; but an adherence to established forms which naturally became more and more jejune and conventional as time went on.

Very different was the course of religious art in the West. There was always in the Church, especially among the severer religious orders, a strong vein of asceticism which objected to all religious representations, and considered them a concession to the spirit of the world and a danger to the spiritual life. But the love of art triumphed over the spirit of Puritanism. However art arose, it has been the spontaneous expression of some of our highest faculties, and thus, for all who believe that God works in and through man, it is in a sense inspired. Even the Jews, though their national genius did not set in the direction of art, yet recognized that good decorative work was a gift from above. When the tabernacle in the wilderness was made, Bezaleel the son of Uri was called in to help, because "the Lord had filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship ; and to devise cunning works, to work in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of cunning workmanship." [1]

If we pass over two millennia, we may find a strikingly similar view set forth by the

[1] Exodus xxxv. 31.

German monk Theodore, in the eleventh century A.D.[1] His book contains practical instructions for work in all materials, but in the preface to Book III he addresses his pupil thus: "Whatever you may be able to learn, understand or invent in the arts, is given you as a gift of the seven-fold Spirit," who bestows sapientia, intellectus, consilium, fortitudo, scientia, pietas, and timor Domini. He adds: "Thou hast, after a fashion, shewn to beholders everything in creation praising God its Creator, and hast caused them to proclaim him admirable in all his works."

The works of Bezaleel and of Theodore alike were mainly decorative, hangings, vessels for sacred use and the like. But Theodore also mentions representations of the sufferings of Christ, and of the saints, the joys of heaven and the tortures of hell. This was the truly religious and ethical feature of his art. But he also delights in the sheer beauty of the church, which is to present the appearance of a heavenly garden, blooming with all kinds of flowers, and green with leaves and grass like the celestial fields where the blessed receive their crowns.

The great art which arose in Northern Europe was conditioned mainly by two historic factors. First, the consolidation of the religious society into a strongly organized church under the rule

[1] *Schedula diversarum artium*, edited and translated by R. Hendrie, 1847.

of Rome, which became in all religious matters an imperious dictature, which over-stepped the limits of country and race, and welded men into a more or less homogeneous commonwealth. And second, the vivifying and stimulating influence of the races of barbarians, which, after overthrowing the Roman Empire, had settled down into a group of kingdoms and dukedoms, and by degrees infused a fresh life into all the activities of men, social, military, commercial and artistic. These nations had not the natural turn for art which had marked the races of Southern Europe, especially the Greeks. But when they were so far civilized as to feel the need of art, they used it to give expression to their own character, restless, enterprising, individualist, deeply interested in the world about them, keenly appreciative also of spiritual realities.

II

There then came into being a homogeneous art, thoroughly suited to the religion of the time. With the great cathedrals and abbeys of the time all are acquainted. It is less clearly realized, especially in England, which has been profoundly affected by the Reformation, that all the other arts worked in harmony with, or in subordination to, that of the architect. As all the arts in Greece centred in the temple with its carvings, its festivals and processions, so in

the Middle Ages the great churches were full of works of sculpture and painting, with vessels and reliquaries ; and in the services and displays connected with worship, magnificent costumes and endless pageants excited the awed admiration of crowds of votaries. Our cathedrals remain ; but their contents have perished.

To an English student, much more interesting than the Christian art of Italy in the later Middle Ages, are the Gothic schools of the more northerly parts of Europe, of Burgundy and Flanders and the Rhine, and more especially of Northern and Central France. It was in France that the most splendid of the Gothic cathedrals arose, at Chartres, Rheims, Rouen, Beauvais, Amiens and other cities. Sometimes these cathedrals were the result of a wave of religious enthusiasm and revival. In the twelfth century such a wave seems to have been originated at Chartres, the seat of perhaps the most typical of the French cathedrals, and to have spread thence to other places. Haymo, Abbot of S. Pierre sur Dives in Normandy, gives an account of what happened in his own district : [1]

" Who ever saw, who ever heard, that kings, princes, mighty men of this world, puffed up with honours and riches, men and women of noble birth, should bind traces upon their proud necks, and submit them to wagons which, after the fashion of brute beasts, they dragged with their

[1] For this account I am indebted to Mr. G. G. Coulton's *Art and the Reformation*, 339.

loads of wine, corn, oil, lime, stones, beams, and other things necessary to sustain life or to build churches, up even unto Christ's abode ? Moreover, while they draw the wagons, we may see this miracle that, although sometimes a thousand men and women, or even more, are bound in the traces, yet they go forward in such silence that no voice, no murmur, is heard. When, again, they pause on the way, then no other voice is heard than confession of guilt, with supplications and pure prayers to God that he may vouchsafe pardon for their sins ; and while the priests there preach peace, hatred is soothed, discord is driven away, debts are forgiven, and unity is restored between man and man."

Of course such outbursts of religious enthusiasm were unusual ; the funds for the building of great churches had generally to be procured in a very different way, sometimes from such sales of indulgences as aroused at a later date the indignation of Luther. We must not too closely investigate the means by which magnificent monuments have been paid for. If the great cathedrals were often partly paid for by the shameless sale of spiritual indulgences, the Parthenon of Pericles was paid for out of the fund contributed by the cities of Greece for defence against the invading power of Persia.

In some of the great Gothic shrines, notably that of Chartres, a great part of the effect of the richly decorated interior is produced by the colouring of the stained windows, which, especially on sunny days, bathe the church in rich colour, which certainly acts strongly on the

emotions. It is not the figures on the windows which impress the visitor; as paintings such figures can never rival those in the paintings and mosaics of the walls of churches, the technique of them being of necessity clumsy. But the coloured windows combine with the rest of the interior decoration, and tend to produce a devout frame of mind.

The development of stained windows belongs mainly to the Gothic north. The windows of Italian churches were larger and let in more light, so that wall-paintings could be more satisfactorily seen. Clearly they would be killed by rivalry with the colours coming through glass. So it is not surprising that in Italy stained windows were sparingly introduced. M. Müntz writes:

"Under Nicholas V (mid-fifteenth century) glass-painting gave a last flicker, before its systematic exclusion from Italian churches; or at least before it ceased as an independent art, and became the handmaid of painting proper, and was reduced to the meanest of rôles, that of mere copyist."

But it was not only at Rome and under Italian influence that objections were raised to the sensualism of coloured windows. Mr. Baldwin Brown, a writer of high authority in all questions of art-history, writes:[1]

"There was a puritan vein in monasticism that led to

[1] Hastings, *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, I, p. 850.

protests against what was regarded as over-exuberance in the use of the element of beauty in the furnishing forth of sacred structures. The so-called Benedictine orders, beginning with the Cluniacs of the tenth century, took as a rule this view, and a striking illustration of its working is to be found in the attitude of the Cistercians towards stained glass. The magnificent display of colour and imagery in the noble French storied windows of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as those at Chartres, they considered too sumptuous for the House of God, and substituted geometrical patterns in grey and yellow. Figure sculpture on the façades of their churches they also repudiated."

But the Cistercians in England still paid homage to beauty in the exquisite carved foliage with which they, somewhat sparingly, adorned their interiors.

The great cathedrals of England, noble as they are, never reached the same ideality as those of France, and have suffered far more from spoliation. From the twelfth century onwards, Northern and Central France became more and more the mistress of the West in all matters of architecture and art. In books of great ability and learning, M. E. Mâle has traced the history of Gothic art in France in the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. He has shown how towards the middle of that period Christian art changed its character. In the thirteenth century it had been extremely fixed and abstract in type, in the highest degree symbolical, incorporating in sculpture and painting the rigid dogmatism of the Church. In the next century

it moved towards naturalism, and began to appeal far more to the emotions. The central figures, Christ and His Mother, appear in fresh and more human form, and a number of fresh types of Saints come in. The influence of the Mystery plays, then frequently performed before great audiences in all the countries of Europe, becomes powerful in determining type and treatment. The contrast may be regarded as parallel to that notable in Greece between the severe and " ethical " art of the fifth century B.C. and the more stirring and " pathetic " art of the fourth century.

But human nature cannot be wholly suppressed, and it is natural that in the capitals of columns, and the carved misereres of mediæval churches, we should find frequently an outburst which reflects the joy of life, representations illustrating the beast-stories of Æsop, or events of everyday life; sometimes figures of animals and plants,[1] which may rival the productions of China and Japan; sometimes subjects sombre and grotesque, sometimes light-hearted and playful. But such representations belong to the undercurrent only, and scarcely constitute a serious tendency. Some great churchmen—for example, S. Bernard in the twelfth century—were utterly opposed to what he considered

[1] A recent and comprehensive account of the treatment of foliage in Gothic art is *English Gothic Foliage Sculpture*, by Samuel Gardner, Cambridge University Press, 1927.

frivolity in the decoration of churches. Animals and monsters, unless they had clearly a meaning in symbolism, he was for entirely rejecting.

It is well known that the walls of mediæval churches were largely covered with paintings. These have suffered terribly in the course of ages. But a certain number survive even in England, where they have suffered more than on the Continent. Attention has been much directed to them lately, partly in consequence of the exhibition of copies, with some originals, at Burlington House. A few reach a considerable level of merit, though most are extremely conventional.

The painting which once adorned the walls of churches has now mostly disappeared, unless it was made permanent in mosaic. We have to judge of it mainly from the windows, which in England have mostly perished, but which survive in many churches of the Continent. To these windows I shall return in Chapter XII.

In an interesting recent work, Mr. L. March Phillipps[1] has dwelt on the emotional effect of mediæval windows. They bathe the interior of great churches in rich dark colour which tends to produce a religious frame of mind. The forms in stained glass may be poor and unattractive, but the total effect is strong, for colour works

[1] *Form and Colour*, Ed. II, 1925.

on the religious emotions more than form. No doubt Mr. Phillipps' view is psychologically correct.

It is easy to understand that some modern writers, notably Ruskin, find the sculpture of Rheims and Chartres and Amiens full of beauty and delight, especially as compared with our modern surroundings. It is noble and lofty, the work of great Churchmen and great Christians, and raised to an infinite height compared with most of the trivial and sentimental art which surrounds us. I am myself by no means insensible to its charm. I remember visiting an exhibition of impressionist sculptural works in London. Persistently I studied the sculpture, piece by piece. But after a time there arose in me such a feeling of disgust, that I fled from it and found shelter among the mediæval figures in the Victoria and Albert Museum. From them a feeling of pleasure and interest invaded me, and drove out the disgust by which I had been almost overpowered. But I should have recovered just as quickly in the galleries of the British Museum.

Of this splendid Gothic art I must speak briefly, looking at it from various points of view. I cannot, of course, expect to do it justice. Of late years it has become to many of us more and more precious. The number of people who roam from cathedral to cathedral, studying, photographing, enjoying, has greatly increased

in recent years.[1] Gothic architecture and art has become to many, like fine music or natural scenery, a great part of the delight in life. Its appeal goes below the surface, for it was our ancestors who created it; and the delight which they took in it finds an echo in the unconscious recesses of our nature. We may greatly enjoy Greek or even Japanese art: but between them and us there is a deeper gulf than between us and our ancestors of the Middle Ages.

We must consider this Gothic sculpture from the side, first of art and then of religion. In the first point of view, it is rather in the mass than as individual figures that we appreciate it. There are, no doubt, at Amiens and Chartres and Rheims many figures of angels and saints and virtues which fill us with delight and admiration. But they were made, not to stand in museums, but to be part of the decoration, a feature in the charm, of great edifices. The sculpture of the Parthenon excites our admiration wherever it be, because it is in itself so beautiful, and we do not, save by an exercise of the intellect, understand its relation to the thought and feeling of the time when it was fashioned. But when we visit a cathedral we

[1] It is a great pleasure to me to cite as authoritative works by members of my own family, *A Guide to English Gothic Architecture*, by Samuel Gardner; *Mediæval Figure Sculpture in England*, by E. S. Prior and Arthur Gardner.

feel as if we were coming home, and realizing a part of our birthright.

Of course in the purely artistic or æsthetic sense Gothic sculpture will not compare with that of the Greeks. Not only were the Greeks infinitely superior to the mediæval sculptors in the sense of the beauty of the human body and in the arrangement of drapery, but even in the face they had far greater power of expression. Alike in their idealism and in their naturalism, they far outsoar all others : they are the masters, and all who have since worked on similar lines seem but to be trying a prentice hand. They knew the human body as a shepherd knows his sheep or as a groom knows horses. And they were full of a passion for the ideal, which makes Greek sculpture for all time the guiding light of artists, as the philosophy of Plato is the guiding light of thinkers, and as the New Testament is the guiding light of those who love the spiritual life.

But taking the figures of Gothic sculpture as wholes, and not too closely criticizing them, we must allow that the best of them are extraordinarily successful, that they express what the artist intended to express, and attract us with an irresistible charm. But fully to appreciate them, we must pass out of England to the churches of France and Flanders. The only English works which approach in merit the figures of the great French cathedrals are the

tombs of some of our kings and nobles, beside here and there a saint or angel which is beautiful almost as it seems by accident.

But while Gothic sculpture is technically inferior to that of Greece, and to the art of the Renaissance which is modelled on that of Greece, it is wider in scope. It incorporates many ideas which were foreign to the Greek mind. While it has little of the studied moderation, the self-control, the sense of balance and measure which are of the essence of Greek art, it shows wider horizons, it is more stimulating to the spirit of worship, it is far more emotional. The ideas of Gothic sculpture come from the religious leaders, the great Churchmen. But the execution, which must have been the work of quite ordinary mechanics, shows a sense of moral beauty which must have been widely spread among the people. In spite of all the crudeness and the brutality of the time, the spirit of Christ still worked in the Church.

I cannot dwell upon the symbolism which ran riot in the art, as it did in the religious literature, of the Gothic age. Guillaume Durand, bishop of Mende in France, wrote in the thirteenth century a book on the inner meaning of the rites and the art works of the Church,[1] in which he interprets every feature of the churches and their decoration in an allegorical

[1] See G. G. Coulton, *Art and the Reformation*, Chapter XIII, "Symbolism."

or symbolical sense. Some of this symbolism was of a generally recognized type, and became a part of orthodoxy; but it is clear that when once a teacher or preacher looks at works of art in the symbolic mood, there is no extreme of fancy to which he might not go. The founder of a church might interpret in one way, the workman in another, the people in various other ways: and every preacher who came by, priest, monk or friar, might torture all kinds of moral and spiritual lessons out of the simplest design. Very amusing chapters might be written on the subject. The four walls of the church may represent the four cardinal virtues: a bell-rope may stand for humility, because it hangs down, and so on. Even the colours of the clothes of saintly persons had mystic meanings. Symbolism is attractive to the imagination of poets and of simple-minded people; but when carried to an extreme is as repugnant to beauty in art as it is to reason and good sense.

But when we turn from the æsthetic charm of works of Gothic art to their religious character, the matter is less simple. They were intimately connected with the Christianity of the time. And the spirit of Christ has never at any time wholly forsaken His church. But that Church has seen seasons of enthusiasm and seasons of torpor, outbursts of inspiration and declensions into superstition.

So that while every one who has any natural or acquired sensibility for art will love and value works of Gothic art for their own sakes, those only whose Christianity is of the same kind as that of the Middle Ages will fully sympathize with and be in harmony with it. It was essentially ecclesiastical, in intimate relations with the life of the cloister. Its scale of virtues and vices was quite different from that of the modern world, even from that of Rome in our days. The plans of the churches and the character of their decoration were decided by a celibate priesthood. The saints who appear so largely in that decoration were sometimes the inventions of a late age: and seldom do they embody a type of saintliness which would appeal to the modern world.

It must of course be understood that in this chapter I have spoken only of fine art or ideal art, art in the best form which it assumed in the Middle Ages. I have not spoken of the art of the people, or of ordinary churches. Of course that was at an infinitely lower level, full through and through of magic, superstition and horror. One of the most usual representations in churches was of the final judgment, and especially of the fate of the wicked. The coarse imagination of the time revelled in paintings of the torments inflicted by devils on their victims; every kind of torture, especially torture by fire attracts it. How far such

representations had power in driving men to a virtuous life, or in deterring them from wickedness, it is hard to say. What is much more certain is that they greatly increased the power of the clergy, who held the keys of death and life, who could open or close the gate of heaven. In most respects the people, setting aside the really fine natures, were still barbarians, and art had to appeal to their coarse natures. The extremes of good and evil among them were far greater than in our own better regulated times. And as the art of the great churches and abbeys illustrated and stimulated the religious enthusiasm of the few, so art in its lower forms fitted in with the coarseness and materialism of the many. Probably few things tended more strongly to the revolt against Rome than the general feeling, as society became more civilized, that the Church had used the baser passions and the weaknesses of men mainly for its own purposes, to secure worldly wealth.

One feature must not be overlooked in regard to mediæval sculpture and painting: they owe much to the Greek tradition which never wholly died out of art, as the philosophic tradition never wholly died out of theology. But for the Greek background, it is exceedingly doubtful whether Christian mediæval art would have lived at a higher level than the Buddhist art of India, to which in many respects it was parallel,

and the human forms of which are to western eyes anything but attractive.

After Gothic architecture and art had begun to decline, we enter on a long period of conflicting tendencies. The history of the interactions of Christianity and paganism, of Gothic Classical and Romantic art is far too intricate to be sketched or summed up in a few pages.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTIAN ART OF THE RENAISSANCE

WE often speak of the Renaissance as a single event. But in fact it was a very complicated series of movements, lasting through centuries. Looking at it broadly it stands for the re-awakening of Europe, after the night of the dark ages. It may be roughly divided into three movements:

(1) The arousing of the Christian world, first perhaps by the Crusades, and second by the rise of the Friars. This occupied the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

(2) The rediscovery of the literature and art of the Greeks: the great work of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

(3) The Reformation, which divided Europe into two great hostile camps, and served as a starting point for the literature and art, both of the Reformation and the counter-reformation. This was the work of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This division is useful as promoting clearness of thought; but of course it is not rigid: there was endless overlapping, action and reaction. Some countries were in

the front of the age-long process: some only took part in it later.

(1) Nearly all great changes in the human world begin beneath the surface, and find embodiment in great personalities. There can be no doubt that the outstanding person in the first period of the awakening was S. Francis of Assisi, who lived in the first half of the thirteenth century. A poor man, not notable for power of intellect, or genius for organization, he shook the world by an inspiration which was a reflection of the primitive inspiration of the Christian society, and which carried all before it. His sweet and saintly character and his universal love, which extended not only to his neighbours, but to criminals and lepers, even to animals and birds, have made him for all time the unmatched exponent of the Christian impulses; while his joyous acceptance of poverty and hardship raised him above all the motives of ordinary people and of daily life. If on the side of intelligence and of organization he was like a child, his deficiencies in these respects were made up by his contemporary, S. Dominic, who stands for the intellectual side of the same wave of influence of which Francis represents the moral and spiritual side. The two orders of friars, the Franciscan and the Dominican, though their natural rivalries brought on inevitable collisions, on the whole worked together for the renewal of the Christian society; and

the greatest men of the period, S. Louis of France, Dante, Thomas Aquinas, carried on the torch which they kindled.

In the art of Italy, the rise of the friars marks the first great break with the Middle Ages, the first steps in the art of modern Europe. With Francis was connected the work of Giotto and his successors, which gave birth to the art of Florence and then of all the schools of Italy. With Dominic was connected the painting of Fra Angelico, painting so simply and fundamentally religious and Christian that his frescoes stand amid the Italian paintings for much the same qualities as were shown in the active life of S. Francis. And as the character of Francis has in recent times won more and more the admiration and enthusiasm of Christians of all schools, largely as a result of the life by M. Paul Sabatier, a Protestant, so the paintings of Fra Angelico have been placed in an unique position by critics of all schools, especially in England. He is perhaps the most Christian of all painters ; and his Christianity is very near that of the Founder of the religion, simple, almost childlike in character, yet with openings towards the sublimest ideals of truth and beauty. He cannot be copied : but he can raise the spirits of those of kindred nature to enthusiasm.

Parallel to the work of the Italian Primitives is the painting of the German and Flemish schools, especially of the Masters of Cologne,

which shows the same breath of life and the same charm. This has been connected by the historians of art with the society of the " Friends of God " or " Brothers of the Free Spirit." In the fourteenth century there was a wave of religious mysticism passing over Germany as other countries ; and the *Theologia Germanica* which appeared about 1350, was followed by the *Imitatio Christi*. In Germany and in Flanders religious art began to shake off the shackles of the mediæval church, and to move in the direction of the ideal. The works of the Primitives, as they are called, have an irresistible attraction for the naturally pious of all ages.

Especially in the schools of painting in Cologne and South Germany, Christian art overcame the tendencies to the ugly and the grotesque, which have always invaded Teutonic art. There is a combination of the realism which is a fundamental tendency of the Gothic mind with a love of beauty and charm which belongs rather to the Italian schools. No doubt much of the latter element is due to Italian influence, and is more at home south than north of the Alps. But the highest art must always include both elements : European culture has roots in the idealism of Greece as well as in the strong character and the ruthlessness of the northern races.

(2) The second stage of the Renaissance arrived when the philosophy, the literature and

the art of the ancient world arose from the tomb and became again living forces. The sculpture of Greece and Rome was again studied, partly in great monuments such as the arch of Beneventum and the Column of Trajan, which had survived, partly in statues recently discovered. In reading the life of Benvenuto Cellini, for instance, one is greatly struck with the unmeasured admiration which the sculpture of Greece and Rome inspired in the greatest of the artists of the Renaissance. Michelangelo especially was in some aspects a continuer of that art, and fully alive to the extent of his debt to it. To rival it was considered the greatest of triumphs: when a sculptor of the period produced a work which could be mistaken for an antique he was delighted. The knowledge of such works was not, of course, entirely new: in Rome there were many statues and reliefs which had never been buried; and those which had been buried were being constantly brought to light. It is a very striking fact that as early as the middle of the thirteenth century Niccola Pisano had adorned the pulpit of the baptistery of Pisa with sculptured reliefs, which in style so closely resemble the reliefs of the Antonine age at Rome as to prove a careful study of the latter. And naturally with a revived admiration for Greek art went a revulsion against Gothic art. The Gothic movement in architecture and art had never seriously

invaded Italy, at all events south of Florence. The Roman hierarchy had always looked down upon it as barbaric ; it belonged to the Nordic peoples, and their virtues and their talents alike were not such as Rome valued highly. The boldness, the individuality, even the spirituality which it breathed were unsuited to the maintenance of the papal obedience. And now Italy had dug out of the tombs of the past splendid weapons wherewith to smite the barbarians.

At the same time, in Italy, as elsewhere, the whole religious background of church art began to go to pieces. The miracle plays, only suited to minds at a childish stage, fell out of use. Historic method began to make its way, and it was gradually realized that the lives of the saints, and even much in the early Christian tradition, could not be maintained as sober history. The background of miracle, never absent from the mind of the Church, began to become pale and to fade. Those who visited the churches found greater and greater difficulty in preserving the childlike and unquestioning faith which was necessary if the representations in them were to be fully appreciated.

It would be quite superfluous for anyone to write a panegyric of the great art of Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It has long been the custom to recognize the great Italian masters of the Renaissance as repre-

senting the third great bloom of the art of Europe, after that of Greece and the Gothic of the later Middle Ages ; and as in fact combining the charms and merits of the other two. How far this art can be considered essentially Christian is a difficult question, the answer to which must, no doubt, largely depend on the notion which one has of Christianity. But it is certain that at that time the secular element was already encroaching in art, and the religious element recessive.

The truth is that just as the Greek art known to the painters of the Renaissance was but a late and feeble phantom of the great art of antiquity, so the Papal religion of the fifteenth century was a degraded and degenerate form of Christianity. The Popes of that age, who stand out as great figures in history, were completely secularized. Their private life was full of luxury and impurity ; and the object of their policy was not the growth of Christianity, but the acquisition of domains in Italy. The demoralization which precipitated the Protestant revolt was growing to a head ; and everywhere there was a feeling that a great reform was necessary. Thus, what most attracted the nobles and the savants of Italy was not the noble and ideal elements in ancient art, but its sensuous and luxurious side ; the new pagan influence came not from the great artists of the fifth century, but from the schools of Praxiteles and

Scopas. So when the counter-reformation set in in Italy in the middle of the sixteenth century, the incongruity between the spirit of Christianity and pagan art became more and more manifest. The two elements had never really amalgamated, and they rapidly became more and more opposed one to the other.

So when we come below the period of Raffaele and Michelangelo, the sculptors and painters in Italy found themselves at the cross-roads. The element of Christianity in their works is a constantly diminishing quantity, although there are exceptions. This was clearly seen by the pre-Raphaelites in England and the so-called Nazarenes in Germany, who harked back to the more primitive artists of Italy who had not been seduced by the glamour of the Renaissance.

The comparative power of Christianity and of the art of Greece over artists varied greatly. Michelangelo, though an earnest Christian, was on the whole more swayed by pagan art than by that of the Church ; and the same may be said of many of his contemporaries and successors. But other Italian painters, in particular Francia and Lippo Lippi, seem to have more of the Christian spirit, and appeal to many modern lovers of art. Their art, however, stands on a different level from their conduct, which often followed the ways of a dissolute age, as Cellini and Vasari show clearly.

(3) In the countries north of the Alps the

direct power of the Classical Renaissance was far less. Indeed, its effect on art was mainly due to Italian influence, but it was not so in letters and history. Erasmus of Rotterdam stands out as a more effective figure in the reversion to classical models than the Italians, such as Pico di Mirandola and Politian. But the strong tradition of Italian painting, deeply rooted in the civilization of the great cities of Italy, was irresistible. It was not until the Reformation that the genius of the north began to be dominant in Teutonic art. Then Europe was divided into two camps, the Catholic and the Protestant. In countries which adhered to the Roman obedience, such as Burgundy and Flanders, the break with the art of the mediæval church was less abrupt, and an art parallel to that of Italy and almost as great went on. But in countries conquered by the Reformation, Germany and Holland in particular, we trace the rise of a new art, neither Classical nor Gothic, of which the most notable feature was its tendency to naturalism, and its great success in portraits.

While the art of the great Italian masters reflects the Christianity, largely paganized and secularized, of the papal court of the time, Dürer, Cranach and Holbein in Germany were incorporating in art with great technical skill the religious movement of the German spirit, which was becoming impressed by humanism

in literature and was travailing to the birth of the Reformation. No one can accuse the art of Dürer of not being masculine. It fails rather in the southern qualities of delicacy and grace. But it tends to drift in the direction of the exact and literal rendering of the forms of nature, and in the direction of portraiture. The history of painting shows that there is an affinity between Protestantism in religion and Naturalism in art. We find the extreme of this tendency in the Dutch schools of painting. With great mastery of technique, and a marvellous power of representing the scenes of nature and all that meets the eye, they are usually deficient in idealism, and therefore in human interest. Respect for fact, acceptance of fact, whatever may be the consequences, is a marked feature of Dutch art. And as extreme respect for the actual tends to limit and weaken imagination, Dutch painting has been weak on that side. It presents a remarkable contrast to the art of the Catholic districts of Flanders and Burgundy.

Holland, indeed, produced one artist of supreme genius, Rembrandt. He was not Catholic, and certainly not Puritan. He is stated by contemporary authority to have belonged to the sect of Mennonites or Anabaptists: but his life was not guided by strict ethical principle. A great proportion of his work was religious; and here he was markedly innovating. Naturally he avoided the themes which the artists of

the Middle Ages had so often accepted, the glories of Mary, the legends of the Saints and the like. He takes his subjects direct from the Old and the New Testament, with which no doubt he was familiar from his youth. And in the treatment of those subjects he does not rival the elegance of form or the mysticism of the great Italians, but takes models and inspiration from the world about him. There is always homeliness in his treatment of themes: the events he portrays take place not in a purely imaginary world, but on the earth. As Jews were abundant in Holland, he tends to use them as models, though he makes no attempt at archæological correctness.

Protestantism is Christocentric, far more so than Catholicism, which disperses its veneration more widely. And it is in the representation of Christ that Rembrandt is most original and inspiring. I borrow a paragraph from an accomplished critic, Professor Baldwin Brown, as to Rembrandt's achievements in this sphere: [1]

"It will be instructive in this connection to take the central figure of the Christian story, and to note the different situations, idyllic, epic, and dramatic, in which Rembrandt has portrayed the figure of Christ. We shall see with what warmth of human feeling he has invested those scenes in which the Saviour, an infant or a growing youth, makes holy by his presence the simple incidents of family life; how he rises to the height

[1] *Rembrandt*, p. 279.

of epic dignity when Christ moves, a mature and heroic form, through the acts of his earthly ministry ; with how intimate a sympathy he withdraws the veil from the scars of agony, and displays the man of sorrows, a sublime though pathetically human figure, in the tragedy of his passion ; and finally how he invests the risen form with a power and grace that have been made perfect through weakness and suffering, and completes the picture by embodying the eternal love that Christ revealed in the father of the Prodigal." " Rembrandt, when at his best, is more satisfying to the religious sense than any other artist."

At the same time, less in Italy than in Flanders, France and Spain, there arose great schools of Catholic art. The counter-reformation was in some countries a more powerful intellectual, artistic and religious force than the Reformation. The Jesuits in particular had wide influence, and great artists like Rubens and Murillo and Bernini filled the post-mediæval churches with sculpture and painting. In every country this neo-Roman art took a different character, conforming to the historical and social conditions. To by far the greater part of the cultivated people in England this kind of art appeals not as Christian but as artistic. Those who travel on the Continent frequent picture galleries and churches and study masterpieces of this as of every kind. But these affect not the religious but the æsthetic faculties of the visitors, except in the case of those who are attracted by the post-Reformation Church of Rome. To most of us there appears such an enormous gap between the fleshliness of Rubens

or the sentimental extravagance of Bernini and the quiet and devotional services of the great majority of our churches that they seem to belong to different worlds.

The estrangement between Christianity and art which began at the Renaissance has gone on and increased alike in the countries still dominated by the Roman Church and those which since the Reformation have stood apart from it. It has not indeed been a uniform and steady process, but one with periods of revolt and periods of reaction. Many artists and many schools have tried to find some way of accommodation between the two, to bring back into art some of the love which at one time united it with religion. These efforts have never met with more than a partial and temporary success. And at present the estrangement between Christianity and art seems, as I have shown in my introductory chapter, almost complete.

CHAPTER XII

MODERN SCHOOLS OF RELIGIOUS ART

HERE must be given a brief account of some of the modern schools which have definitely tried to produce a new Christian art. Of these, however, I can only mention a few which have impressed me. A fuller account would be useless unless accompanied by illustrations, and would require a greater knowledge of the churches and galleries of Europe than the present writer possesses. Setting aside landscape-painting, of which I have already spoken, and confining our observation to humanist and mystic art, we shall find only one school in recent English painting which is of importance, the school of the pre-Raphaelites. The work of these painters is definitely idealizing and definitely Christian; and it has been of great value to the religious life of the English people.

The world of art is moving so fast, and so much at random, that to many readers the art of the pre-Raphaelites will seem out of date, a back-number, as the saying goes. Generally in the criticism of literature and art, the pro-

ductions of fifty years ago seem antiquated, more so than the productions of an earlier time. That is the way with fashion: the fashion we have lately given up seems especially unfashionable. But the pre-Raphaelite movement occupies an important place in history, and especially in English history. Dr. Muther, the learned professor of Breslau, writes: [1]

"English New Idealism is probably the most remarkable form of art upon which the sun has ever shone: borrowed and yet in the highest degree personal, combining an almost childlike simplicity of feeling with a morbid *hautgout*, the most attentive and intelligent study of the old masters with free creative modern imagination."

And in another place he writes [2] of Rossetti:

"His painting was a drop of most precious essence, in its hues enchanting and intoxicating, the strongest spiritual potion ever brewed in English art. This tendency of spirit was so novel, this plunge into the tide of mysticism so enchanting, this delicate archaic fragrance so overwhelming, that a new stage in the culture of modern England dates from the appearance of Rossetti."

And the great influence among the young of photographs of the works of Rossetti, the designs of Burne-Jones, and the paintings of Holman Hunt show that the leaven is still working.

The pre-Raphaelite movement was a stream which united tributaries from many sources, the poetry of Keats and Tennyson and Swinburne, the art-criticism of Ruskin, the high

[1] *History of Modern Painting*, 1907, III, p. 157.
[2] Ibid., p. 175.

church movement led by Keble, Pusey and Newman, the publication by photographs of the great Italians, the Gothic revival in architecture. It will always be one of the chief glories of nineteenth century Oxford that it was the cradle of the movement, that its chief priest was an Oxford Professor of Art and that it rose into a school in the frescoes of the library of the Oxford Union Society.

As the Thames at Oxford combines the waters of the Isis and the Cherwell, so the pre-Raphaelite school combined two very different tendencies. First there was the impulse, characteristic of most vigorous young schools of art, to throw aside convention and go back to nature. The earliest paintings of the group repeat with meticulous scrupulousness all the details of natural objects, birds and trees and flowers. In exactness they even outdo the Dutch. But mingled with this naturalism there is a new and ambitious idealism, which looks beyond the mere appearances of nature into the soul of man and into his relations with the world of spirit.

The naturalism of the school was most fully represented by Holman Hunt and Millais. The former adhered to his principles with true English tenacity all his life. His autobiography is a most interesting record of a life wholly given up to a great purpose, and by such surrender made noble and dignified. Millais, who

by degrees fell under the sway of the world, and represented it in charming pictures, was technically one of the most consummate painters who ever handled a brush; and the rigid studies of his youth kept him always in touch with nature. Rather older than both was Ford Madox Brown, whose paintings, while they are severely naturalist, have a puritan type, a strong seriousness.

The idealism of the school was of course deeply indebted to Rossetti, of Italian parentage, who found his congeners among the primitive Italian painters of the fifteenth century; and whose name Dante Gabriel shows how from birth he was destined to the worship of the angels and of Dante. His great personal influence tended to draw all his friends away from the sordidness of modern surroundings into the world of legend of dream and of mysticism. But that influence was mingled with much that was unhealthy: his mind in later life became clouded, and as is the way with the followers of a man of genius, his associates often followed rather his foibles than his achievements. The torch of an æsthetic idealism was carried on by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, who has given the tone to illustrations of Arthurian romance and Christian story in halls and churches.

Hardly less influential was William Morris, the craftsman who connected the movement with

the work of every day, with the production of chairs and tables, wall-papers and carpets. It can hardly be denied that William Morris in his inmost nature was a man of robust genius and marvellous natural taste. At a stroke he drove out of the domain of production a mass of ugly conventions which had become fixed in the early Victorian Age. He appealed to eternal principles, that natural forms are consistently beautiful and the worthiest subjects to copy and adapt, that the usefulness of any object of daily employment should determine its form, that ornament should not be laid on the surface of a production but derived from its character, that all production should be such that the workman should be able to take pleasure in it, that mere mechanical production is immeasurably below the level of that which shows thought and imagination. He gave bodily form to many of the principles which Ruskin with inimitable eloquence had proclaimed. Unfortunately, social and economic conditions were such that works in the manner of Morris were necessarily very costly, and therefore could only be purchased by the well-to-do: to anything like mass-production his canons could not be applied.

Morris exercised in the whole field of arts and crafts a prodigious influence, which must be in a great measure abiding. But since his death, the pendulum has swung back. It is an inevitable result of the sway of fashion, which seeks

for what is smart and novel rather than for that which is in accord with nature and reason, that good customs cannot be permanent. The *blasé* taste of the wealthy must be gratified by variety and change ; hence if fashion at any time makes a move in the direction of the better, a reaction at once sets in in favour of the worse. Many unhealthy forms and tendencies, which the followers of Morris thought to have gone for ever, have been insidiously returning. In fashion there is no better and worse, no reasonable and absurd, only a flux this way and that, without principles or ideals ; and, as things stand, those who oppose fashion are in the case of those who oppose the car of Juggernaut.

The painters of the pre-Raphaelite group had two main qualities. In the first place, they had profound love for nature, for an exact and even meticulous copy of objects in the external world. Flowers and animals, dress and background, they copied with infinite pains and in complete detail. Thus they lost the sense of wholeness ; they made more of the letter of nature than of her spirit ; they became in a sense pedants. It was a noble fault ; and it scarcely seems a fault to us who are confronted with the daubs and absurdities of more recent painters. But pure naturalism soon becomes uninteresting, and cannot, without ideas, hold a school together.

But the pre-Raphaelites had ideas also, which were in part supplied by Rossetti. And though

the lines of connection are not clear, we cannot be wrong in seeing in the whole movement a parallel to the revival of institutional religion which took place at the time under the leadership of Pusey and Keble and Newman. In combining Dutch love of detail and realism with the Italian art which showed the influence of the great Italian movement which started with the Friars and was incorporated in the works of the followers of Giotto, and in the immortal poem of Dante, the pre-Raphaelites showed themselves susceptible to both Catholic and Protestant tendencies of thought and feeling. And in so doing they were—in spite of the influence of Rossetti—thoroughly English : the Church of England, that thoroughly national institution, is also a compound of Catholic and Protestant elements. The art of the counter-reformation, the art of the Jesuits, of Bernini and Rubens and Murillo in no way attracted the pre-Raphaelites ; and here also they embodied the feeling, not only of Ruskin, but of most cultivated Englishmen.

Of all the members of the pre-Raphaelite school, the one supreme in talent and technique was Millais ; but he early left his first love, and employed his marvellous ability in any direction which promised social and pecuniary success. So there is little in his later work which can be called religious or even ideal. In portraits, beyond dispute, he showed insight ; but on the

whole he became a great realist with a love for sentiment.

Among the pictures which in England have had most influence on the religious imagination is Holman Hunt's "Light of the World." Whatever may be its technical merits or defects, it does undoubtedly appeal to the ordinary Christian mind. Its power may be compared to that of Newman's admirable hymn "Lead, kindly light," and it is exercised not only on Churchmen, but also on Nonconformists of every kind. It may be taken as showing that a Christian modern art is possible. Next to this work we may place such religious paintings of the pre-Raphaelites as the "Ecce Ancilla Domini" of Rossetti, and the "Jesus in the Carpenter's Shop" of Millais. But such works occupy a precarious ground between the representations of scenes from the life of Jesus which are frankly naturalist, and painted from modern Jewish models, and works of symbolism which the ordinary observer does not understand or appreciate. The former kind of work, no doubt, has its value. It is parallel to the work of the higher criticism in making more real to the imagination the conditions of early Christianity, the background against which the great drama of redemption was played, and the purely human side of the Redeemer. But it needs a touch of mysticism, of a passing beyond mere historic fact, before it can claim

to be Christian in a higher sense. Of the latter kind of work, Holman Hunt's "Flight into Egypt" is a good specimen, as are some of the works of Watts.

Sir Edward Burne-Jones was a later product of the same school. He has produced so many coloured windows that he must have had a very wide influence. And no doubt he has tended to arouse a love of beauty. For this, amid our ugly surroundings, we must be grateful. But it is profoundly to be regretted that his work is not of a more manly and healthy sort. His women, instead of being fresh and vigorous, are of an anæmic and tuberculous type, and all too well adapted to please the unhealthy taste of sentimental women and effeminate men. It is greatly to be feared that much of his work tends to further the spread of physical decadence and weak sentimentality.

It is obvious to anyone used to works of Greek art that the paintings of Burne-Jones have far more affinity to the works of Praxiteles than to the more robust and manly forms of Pheidias and Polycleitus. We may trace this unfortunate preference to historic causes. The pre-Raphaelites, as is well known, were strongly influenced by the works of the early Renaissance, which were in turn influenced by such remains of Greek and Græco-Roman art as were then known. And these latter were predominantly under the influence of the school of Praxiteles,

a school which during the decline of the art of Hellas was universally prevalent. Works of the fifth century were scarcely known in Italy at the time; indeed, until the sculptures of the Parthenon were brought by Lord Elgin to England, they were not properly valued or appreciated. But the most striking features of the figures of Praxiteles were two. In the first place, they were all in a bent and lounging attitude, showing neither robust vigour of body nor energy of character. We have copies of a whole series of such works, the Satyr of the Capitol, the Apollo Sauroctonus, the Cnidian Aphrodite and other figures, which had enormous influence on the art of later Greece. And in the second place, in the faces and motives of these statues we have a strong infusion of the pathetic element; they do not embody either moral force or manly action, but lead the way to sentimentality and effeminacy. If Burne-Jones had been able to break away from this tendency, he might have produced works of a more vigorous and energetic type; as it is, his stained windows better accord with a soft and sentimental kind of Christianity than with the kind notable in all the great heroes of Christianity, from St. Paul onwards.

Another point in which Burne-Jones is defective is in balance and measure, without which there can be no adequate form in art. Here again, if he had gone back from degenerate to

progressive Greek art, he would have found abundant models ; for no feature in good Greek art is more conspicuous than symmetry and rhythm. Some of the paintings of Burne-Jones, notably the great painting of the "Passing of King Arthur," in Walpole House, Chiswick, are even painfully wanting in organization and grouping. The eye roves over it in a desultory way without adequate direction.

In going back to such painters as Philippo Lippi, Masaccio, and especially Botticelli and Fra Angelico, the pre-Raphaelites were preceded by a school of German painters who worked at Rome early in the nineteenth century, and who are known by the appellation of Nazarenes. Attracted to the Church of Rome, and living a secluded and almost monastic life, they laboured earnestly to re-introduce into art something of the Christian spirit of the period which preceded the great Reformation. Their most characteristic works were executed in fresco, a kind of painting which had almost disappeared, and which they were determined to revive. They painted in Rome a series of scenes from the life of St. Joseph, and many other frescoes in Germany, such as Veit's picture of the introduction of Christianity into Germany by Boniface, in the Staedel Institute at Frankfort, and Steinle's frescoes in the great cathedrals at Aachen, Strasburg and Cologne. Better known is Overbeck, who remained at Rome to

the end of his life, and painted many scenes from the life of Christ. The Nazarene tradition was carried on, through the patronage of King Ludwig of Bavaria, by Cornelius, a grandiose figure who covered the walls at Munich with ambitious frescoes. But modern critics have little praise for him: he was dependent upon Michelangelo, and tried to convey into his paintings rather philosophic thought than religious emotion or attractive beauty. When the Nazarene painters departed from Christian subjects, they preferred the tales of early Germany to the mythology of Greece, and chose such subjects as the Lorelei or scenes from the epic of the Nibelungs.

In the technique of these artists there were two obviously weak points: they were unskilled in the use of colour, rather draughtsmen than painters, and they disdained the use of models, preferring to fall back upon their own imaginations. But of technique it is not my business to speak.

The pre-Raphaelite school in England presents in some ways a parallel to the Nazarenes, and in other ways contrasts with them. Both schools greatly valued the predecessors of Raphael, and could find in his successors little but degeneracy. Both schools arose out of a tide of Christian feeling, though in England that tide did not, as was the case with the Nazarenes, carry them on to Rome. Both

schools tried to revive fresco painting as the worthiest vehicle for Christian art. In England the pre-Raphaelites began with painting frescoes from the Arthurian legends in the Library of the Union Society at Oxford, frescoes which in consequence of want of knowledge of the proper processes of fresco painting have long since perished. Later, Burne-Jones, unfortunately perhaps, gave up frescoes for stained-glass windows. To this point I return in my fourteenth chapter. But in some things the pre-Raphaelites were greatly superior to their German congeners. They painted with infinite care and pains ; and partly for that reason their influence has been more lasting. They also had a far keener love of nature and the actual.

G. F. Watts was a remarkable figure in painting during the last half of the nineteenth century. He did not belong to the pre-Raphaelite school, although he shared many of their notions, and like them was closely related to Ruskin and Tennyson. In fact, he could not have belonged to any school ; he stood in proud eminence, and somewhat isolated. From his youth onwards, it was his ambition to paint great frescoes in public buildings, and to raise the attention of the people to great themes and notable events in history. He held that " through fresco painting only it was possible to school art to monumental grandeur, nobleness and simplicity," and certainly the two

first of these qualities are to be found in his works. He actually executed frescoes for the House of Lords, the hall of Lincoln's Inn and other places; but his talents hardly met the appreciation they deserved. He must be classed rather as an ethical than as a religious artist; and his ethics were of a severe and stoical, rather than of an active, type. But he was a great idealist, who lived all his life for the ideal, who saw through appearance to the reality behind it. Two classes of his works are widely known through reproductions, his portraits and his allegories. The portraits reproduce rather what a man might be than what he actually was, and when placed beside portraits of the same individual by great realists like Millais and Herkomer they seem faint and wanting in character; yet they record realities quite as much as portraits of a strongly characteristic type.

The allegories of Watts, Hope, Love and Death, Mammon, the Minotaur and others appeal strongly to the imaginative, especially the young, and when they are understood, have power; but they mostly need explanation, and may be interpreted in various ways. They fail in simplicity, and can scarcely make a popular appeal. In other days Watts would have been a great religious artist: the neglect and decay of religion has spoiled the energy of his appeal.

William Blake has many devotees. He is one of those artists who appeal to the mystic

as an individual, and are therefore hardly to be criticized. His work belongs to the borderland between suggestive mysticism and insanity; and however much he may affect individuals, he could not be the artist of a Church or even of a religious school. His technical defects are so great that he cannot be seriously compared with the great artists of the past. His example is stimulating as showing that even in our crowded and restless cities an artist may live in the spirit; but he could only do so by becoming a recluse, and living in a backwater, out of the stream of fresh life.

The taste for such works as those of Blake will probably always be confined to a few; and the few will fail when they try to explain their admiration. Just as a work of literature will not live, unless it is written in a pleasing style, so paintings will not survive unless they have technical merit. Where a certain degree of mystical tendency goes with fine execution, as in the works of Holman Hunt and Watts, a great and perhaps a lasting reputation may be made. But the attempts of poorly trained and incompetent painters to convey higher meaning by violations of truth and perspective are the most ephemeral of productions. It seems to me that there is little hope of any help to religion from works of such schools as the Post-Impressionists, the Futurists and the like. They appeal, not to truth and the spiritual

nature of man, but to fashion and the fancy of the day; and it is probable that they will soon disappear as fashions in dress disappear. M. Maritain, in his *Art et Scolastique*,[1] after admitting that in the art of the primitives there may be found some analogies to the works of the nihilist modern schools, even those of the cubists, maintains that these analogies are merely material, while the underlying spirit is quite different. But he adds that, although the modern schools are in many ways at the antipodes to Christianity, yet they are less hostile to Christian art than is the ordinary academic art. He evidently fancies it possible that they might, like St. Paul, turn from persecutors to preachers of Christianity. I merely state this view, which I do not propose to criticize.

In other countries of Europe there have been attempts to produce an art fundamentally Christian. To Englishmen the attempts made in Scandinavia are especially interesting, since the kinship in race and feeling between us and the Scandinavians is close. Especially interesting are the fresco paintings of J. Skavgaard in the cathedral of Viborg. Skavgaard felt, like Watts, that fresco painting was the natural and perhaps the only kind of art adapted to modern churches. He was contemporary with, and representative of, a remarkable revival of evangelical religion which stirred Denmark at

[1] p. 174.

the time. I have never seen these paintings, only photographs of them; but they appear to have much freshness. Some represent Old Testament stories, such as the Creation and the sacrifice of Abraham; others take up specially Christian themes, such as the descent of Christ into Hades and the rescuing thence of Adam and Eve. I cannot criticize them in detail: their most notable feature is a certain modernity and an infusion of religious sentiment, the word sentiment not being used by way of blame, but only descriptively. Some of his male figures, Abraham and Isaac and the Good Shepherd, are certainly beautiful. He sometimes reminds us of Fra Anglico.

In France, Maurice Denis is similar in his methods to the pre-Raphaelites. The great Bible of Tissot with a great number of scenes has had a vogue. He has tried to reproduce the original setting of the Biblical narratives by making studies in Syria and portraits of Jews in our own time. He does not stand alone. As M. Brehier remarks:

"It cannot be denied that in the multitude of works of religious character, which appear every year in our exhibitions, one finds estimable intentions more often than valuable results. The kind of Christian art which will adorn the churches of the future is not yet discovered: but it is interesting to observe that it is being sought with ardour on all sides and in all countries." [1]

[1] *L'Art Chrétien*, p. 413.

For any full account of these attempts, the reader may best turn to the great history of modern painting by Muther, translated into English. Without the help of illustrations, it would be useless to speak here of such painters as Von Uhde in Germany, of Flandrin and Ary Scheffer in France, of W. Hole in Scotland. Each of these will appeal to some audience, but the problem remains.

I have spoken so far of art as an independent activity, of substantive as opposed to merely dependent art. But in England, literature is far more living than art. And it is probable that among us art exercises its widest power as merely illustrative. In Greece, art was proudly independent of literature, and preferred to go its own way, without reference to literature, epic or dramatic. But it can no longer take so proud a line. One of the most useful functions which painting can now fulfil, is by illustrating and making real to us the great works of imaginative literature. How much the works of Thackeray, Scott and others owe to illustrations in the printed page, and in our picture galleries! In a moment, these carry our minds to the scenes which the writers are describing, or they intensify the emotion with which we read their tales or lyric verse. I may emphasize this by quoting a reminiscence of my youth. When I was young, Tennyson exercised a wonderful sway over the minds and

imaginations of young men, such as has certainly not been exercised by any poet since that time. When the beautiful edition of his minor poems appeared in 1857, illustrated by Holman Hunt, Millais, and the whole group of pre-Raphaelite artists, it was a great event. Poem and picture became so closely united in thought and feeling, that when one came into the mind the other came with it. And to this day, in my memory, the short poems of Tennyson are inseparable from the early forms of the pre-Raphaelite movement.

This subordinate and illustrative function may well be performed by artists in relation to the great religious books. The Bible, Milton and our other great religious poets may become more potent among us, and in particular more transfused with emotion through the works of great painters. In a democratic age, the lantern lecture may be a powerful force to enlighten the intelligence and touch the fancy of the young. There is no use in being squeamish, or thinking that we can stand above the ministering to popular needs. If we do not educate our masters, our masters may destroy our education as a thing without value.

Thus illustrations in the text, or paintings, even if they be neither striking or profound, may by merely calling attention to passages of scripture, be of value. For example, a woman sweeping a floor can hardly be said to be a

religious work; but if it call up to the mind the wonderful parable of the lost piece of money, it may profit many. Such illustrations of the parables of the Gospels are, as Mr. Coulton has pointed out, seldom attempted in Gothic art: but in our more literary age they are quite in place.

The recent attempts to create a Christian art seem clearly to establish certain views as to the general character which such an art must take.

(1) Its strength and its appeal must be found in painting and not in sculpture. Painting is an art of far wider appeal than sculpture, and one far more in conformity with modern conditions and tendencies. In the Gothic age sculpture reached a height and splendour which cannot be overlooked or forgotten; and its products on some of the great cathedrals on the Continent have attained a position so strong that it would be very difficult to produce any new types which would rival those of the mediæval Church. This would apply less, of course, to subjects wholly modern in character, with which the mediæval sculpture would not be in rivalry. But the general trend of modern artists of strongly Christian type away from sculpture towards painting is a fact which cannot be gainsaid and should not be minimized. Moreover, it is worth consideration that in the Eastern churches figures of apostles and saints were allowed in painting but not in sculpture.

This distinction was established after the great controversies of the time of the Iconoclastic Emperors. There can be no doubt that the distinction has deep roots in psychology, for sacred images, especially small images which can be carried about, have a strong tendency to become mascots, and to be regarded as having miraculous powers. It is true that the peasantry of Russia do attribute such powers to the little paintings which they carry on their persons. But paintings of greater size and higher aspiration in the churches are not nearly so liable to be thus misused.

(2) The form that religious paintings will naturally take is that of fresco, paintings on the plaster covering of walls, especially the walls of churches. As to this there is a great concensus of opinion: Madox Brown and Watts in England, Puvis de Chavannes in France, Veit and Steinle, Overbeck and Cornelius in Germany, Skavgaard in Denmark were all attracted to fresco painting on a large scale. Of course, this fact does not condemn easel painting of a religious character: and in fact, many Christian subjects are more suitable to a less public manner of representation. But to be successful art should appeal not only to wealthy amateurs but to Christian congregations, which of course are not to be confused with the mere populace: the latter has very seldom in the course of history cared much about art in any form.

(3) While adhering to the inspiration which comes from Scripture and historic tradition, art for any fresh elements and to suit a modern audience, must go to nature. This is one of the best teachings of great writers about art, and it is expressed with unrivalled brilliancy by Ruskin. The pre-Raphaelites clearly saw this in the early days of their illumination ; though they carried the tendency to a materialistic extreme in painting the objects which surround us in nature with a painful and meticulous exactness, which has often antagonized the critics, who saw that the human eye is not made in this microscopic way, but desires broader views. Still, that nature is full of beauty, and that the close study of nature must lend charm to a painting, is one of the safest of views. Ordinary people look in a picture for a strict copy of nature, and the one thing which stimulates their opposition is a misreading of it. One cannot keep one's ears open at any exhibition of pictures without noticing this. Probably it has always been the case. Even Aristotle regards painting as a purely mimetic art ; and the stories, mostly apocryphal, told of the great Greek painters, usually dwell on the life-likeness of their works, which pleased the man in the street. At a somewhat higher level, accomplished students of nature are offended by any picture which is blind to the real nature of the thing portrayed, the characteristic points in

objects which we see every day. The first duty of an artist is to use his eyes, his second duty is to interpret to others the facts which he sees.

In representing scenes from the Bible there has, in the last half-century, arisen a tendency to study scenery and background in Palestine itself, and so supersede the Italian backgrounds usual in the art of the sixteenth century. The growing custom of Eastern travel works in with this tendency. Holman Hunt lived long in Palestine, and the backgrounds of some of his pictures are the result of great labour, notably in the case of "The Scapegoat." There have been also in France several artists who try hard to get a really Oriental background: J. Tissot, in his great illustrated life of Jesus Christ; Bida, who illustrated the Gospel of Matthew, and others.

It is easy in the streets of Jerusalem, or even in certain regions of London, to find bearded men, youths or women who bear a strongly marked Jewish character, and to repeat them in representations of Abraham or David or St. Paul, or even Jesus Christ Himself. Unfortunately, these modern Jews are seldom of noble type; the agelong imprisonment in the Ghettos of Europe has intensified their sour and defiant look. They can hardly be like the Sheiks and the peasants of ancient Judea and Galilee, who lived in close relations with the life of nature

and were free from the pressing care of making a living. In any case, they can hardly represent for Christians the originators of their faith; they are not Christian, but anti-Christian. Especially the attempt to realize the personalities of the Saviour and His Mother by depicting ordinary Jewish types is hopeless. For centuries the greatest artists of Europe have been struggling to portray a Mother and Son who should correspond to the idealizing wish of Christians; and during the struggle every race in Europe has contributed its best features —the Italians, the Spaniards, the Flemings, even the English (as in the paintings of Reynolds). Jesus Christ, whatever may have been His actual type—and the people of Galilee were a mixed race, and not pure Jews—has long ceased to belong to any race, and has become the representative of all. Thus the closer an artist approaches to literal fact, the farther he may depart from that ideal which is more true than mere fact. Yet the search for fact is so deeply founded in the modern mind that it does not answer to disregard it.

In such matters also as dress and background, there has been a tendency, among Christian painters, to drift away from the conventions of the Renaissance and to introduce elements of fact and experience. Some of them have tried to translate the traditional scene into one of

our days; as Von Uhde gives the characters of Scripture the dress of modern German peasants; and to take background and scenery from the field to which the modern eye is accustomed. It is a matter of taste and of compromise. A painting which merely introduced scripture characters into a modern setting of the Dutch kind would not be tolerated by most people: but a gentle mingling of things ancient and modern, if transfused with piety and religious feeling, may often charm. That is in fact to produce in painting a parallel to our ordinary ways of realizing for ourselves the events and the tendencies of the history of Christianity. We want to feel that the event really took place in this human world: but at the same time we want to raise it above the level of the sordid happenings of everyday life. It must be at once real and ideal. I think that in the presentation on the stage of the really great tragedies of such immortals as Sophocles and Shakespeare, we have a similar problem. We do not want a revival of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* to approach the character of a pantomime: and we do not want it to be relegated to a wholly fanciful world: it must be humanized, but not humanized by being made too naturalistic.

(4) So far as modern religious painters are in debt to their predecessors, it is usually to the artists of Italy, Flanders and Germany in

the age which preceded the Renaissance. This again was fully recognized both by the English and the German school. And in fact, there has been in all the countries of Europe in recent years a decided turning, a turning in admiration and respect, towards the Primitives, as they are called. In spite of the magnificent triumphs of the sixteenth-century artists, there is a general feeling among those who are really sensitive to art that in some respects they show a regression from the lofty standard of their predecessors, especially from the ethical and religious points of view. This falling off is closely parallel to the decline of high art after the fifth century in Greece, when technique and execution remained at a very high level and even improved, while the religious and moral elements which had inspired the art of the fifth century began to forsake the artist.

(5) There has been among religious painters a revolt against any tendency which may be called didactic, any attempt to draw an obvious and facile moral. In the criticism of literature, the view has long reigned that the obvious presentation of a moral, the exhibition of a writer's intention to promulgate certain views, destroys the artistic character of a novel or a play. This is quite as much the case in painting. The moral may be, and should be, present; but it should rather underlie the picture than be obvious on the surface of it. *Ars est celare*

artem. In the same way the moralist or the religious teacher is most successful when his audience take in his teaching without being aware how or why they do so.

(6) When Watts was asked to which of his predecessors he was most indebted, he replied, "To the sculptors of the Elgin Marbles." The debt is not one obvious on the surface, as the likeness between Watts and fifth-century Greek art is by no means obvious. But we must not disregard the testimony of the great artist. And it appears to me that any great school of art in the future must stand in close relation to the finest works of the Greek chisel. Such works were unknown to the painters of the Renaissance, and have never been really accessible to artists until our own times. Now photographs and casts are multiplied, and to be found in all centres of culture; travelling has become easier and more usual; and besides this there come constantly to the surface, through excavation in classic lands, sculptures of extreme beauty and often of quite a new type. I need but mention such sites as Athens, Olympia, Delphi, Rome, Cyrene, which have poured out, in an incessant stream, works of great beauty and originality. These works have not become known as they should be in the schools of art, which still exhibit, as the finest of ancient works, copies made in Hellenistic and Roman times of the statues of

great Greek masters. Archæologists are well acquainted with them: but they are sometimes published in books too expensive to be bought by any but great museums and millionaires. But in all matters of taste in plastic art, we have, and probably always shall have, to go back to Greece for principles, just as we go back to the Gospels for the principles of religion, and to the works of Bach, Handel and Beethoven for the foundations of music.

The art of the great Greek masters has obvious limitations, but within their own limits they were supreme. Naturally we should not go to them as models in matters in which the best contemporary civilization has incontestably passed beyond them. We cannot regard their paganism as in moral and spiritual matters on a level with Christianity. Our religion has far higher themes than theirs; and it looks back upon a splendid history to which Greek religion could offer no parallel. In technique also, the scientific study of light and colour, nearly two thousand years of experiment and discovery have placed us at a great height above the Greeks. Yet in some ways they are still our masters, and art-education should always, as did ideal art in history, begin with them. The individual, in his development, will always go through a process similar to the history of the race.

We may compare the history of athletic

sports, in which also the Greeks were the first to attain excellence, and to introduce principles which must remain for all time. The Greeks cultivated the body with less knowledge, but perhaps with no less success, than the moderns. It is astonishing how little modern athletic sports differ from those of Hellas. The dumb-bells of Greek origin have become of great importance in modern gymnasia ; and by studying Greek athletic representations modern athletes have even in the present century made progress.

Or we may compare the history of philosophy. The great achievements of modern thought have by no means made obsolete the reasoned systems of Plato and Aristotle. It has been said of some of the greatest of modern philosophic treatises that they are little but Aristotle brought up to date. And in every generation new schools of Christian thought are founded on a Platonic basis. A great historian like Macaulay could place Thucydides at the head of the writers of history through all time : and many a modern poet would give the first place in the world of imagination to Homer. In the same way the principles of Greek art are immortal, especially in matters of form and composition.

As regards the subjects in Christian art which are suitable to modern times, I propose to say more in a later chapter.

CHAPTER XIII

RITUAL IN THE ENGLISH CHURCH

I

BEYOND doubt there is prevalent in many quarters a notion that the Modernist Movement in the Church of England is indifferent to art, and of too severely critical a temperament; while many Anglicans, and especially the young among them, crave some satisfaction for their æsthetic susceptibilities in religion. It is this craving which has attracted many in our great cities to churches where music and ritual play an important part. The originators of the Oxford Movement in the middle of the last century, notably Dr. Pusey, had little sympathy with the development of ritual and art. It was natural that to College Dons, profoundly interested in ethical and theological questions, the outward aspect of public worship should have seemed almost indifferent. But when the principles of the Catholic reaction spread to great cities, and took hold of the younger clergy, there arose at once a tendency to embellish the churches and

the services held in them. At the same time the Romantic Movement, which glorified the Middle Ages, and regarded them as exhibiting in the highest degree the tendencies of Christianity, had a great influence in literature. And the Gothic revival in architecture naturally called attention to the kinds of ritual with which Gothic architecture had originally been associated.

Few would deny that the spread of ritualism has in some ways been of service to the English Church. It has almost driven out the convention and slovenliness which were dominant in many country churches, and it has introduced more orderly and seemly ways. But, on the other hand, it has tended to give vogue to theological views which commonly go with more elaborate ritual, and which are often by no means free from superstition. These views have been proclaimed from the pulpit, and have found a lodgment in the minds of many people, especially of the young, who are more susceptible to the influence coming through the senses.

In her great cathedrals and ancient churches the English Church has an asset of great value ; but it is certain that she does not and cannot live in complete harmony with them. They were planned and built to harmonize with a religion utterly different from that of the vast majority of the modern English people, a

religion of mystery, of supernaturalism and of ceremony. While the architecture of Northern Catholicism has survived, the internal arrangement and decoration of the churches has been entirely transformed. The side-chapels, in which the devotions of our ancestors found centres, are preserved only as the place of tombs and as museums. The naves have been adapted to congregational worship, and the choirs are used mainly as places for the singers. The statues of the Virgin and the Saints, the mural paintings, even the stained windows, have mostly disappeared, or exist only in fragmentary survivals cherished less for their religious than for their historic and artistic interest. The services, instead of being a mystery practised by the clergy, have become an expression of popular and personal religion.

Nor is there the least prospect of the restoration of what has gone. Zealous clergymen of Catholic leanings may here and there restore some ceremony which had gone out of use. But it is certain that, unless England goes back to the Roman obedience, she can never attain, on what are called Catholic lines, to more than a faint echo of the mediæval religion, but must be content with shadows.

In modern England, so far as my very imperfect knowledge goes, there is now no school of religious art which successfully appeals to the religious mystic. The conservative schools

of mysticism value the artistic legacies of Catholicism, but do not produce fresh artistic developments except such as are merely imitative, as in the works of Mr. Gill. Some modern schools of mysticism, notably the Quakers, are aloof from art altogether. If they have so far modified their original impulse as to appreciate music and the drama, and even to tolerate secular painting and sculpture, they regard these developments as lying quite apart from their religious views, as indifferent to the relations of the spirit of man to the Spirit of God.

At a lower level, the religion which moves the people rather than the higher mystics finds satisfaction in some of those branches of art which are most at home amid barbarous surroundings, in religious dancing, vestments and processions. When one attends the festival services of the Roman Church in South Italy or Sicily, one finds what may fairly be called a religious dance going on all the time, with constant changes of vestments. There is continual movement, advance and retreat, fresh groupings, with constant use of incense, and as a sort of accompaniment music and prayers in the background. To the performers and some of the more highly educated of the congregation there may be ceremonies of mystic meaning going on. The mass of the audience, it is to be feared, think most of the glamour of the spectacle and

the splendour of the robes. Yet it would be unnecessarily cynical to suppose that their spirits do not gain stimulus and refreshment from the symbolism which underlies the whole. I do not care to discuss the religious value of such services; this must be set forth by such men as are used to them, of whose relation to God and the Christian community they form a part. But I must be allowed to say that imitations of them in the English Church partake of the nature of retrogression, of the substitution of a more materialistic for a more spiritual rendering of religion. They will not please men of ordinary English type, strong rather on the ethical than on the ritualistic side. They are no satisfactory substitute for the simple and inward piety of the best of our people. And unless the Founder of Christianity is completely misrepresented in the Gospels, we may feel quite sure that outward ceremonies are less in accordance with His spirit than inner devotion.

It is at this point that I find myself out of harmony with a modern Church writer of some authority, Dr. Percy Dearmer. In various works[1] he has treated of art in the English Church in our day. And in a sense he is liberal and modern, wishing to adapt to present uses the ritual, the dress, the processions of the Middle Ages. Also his theology is anything but bigoted or fossilized. To a particular class of readers, and

[1] *The Parson's Handbook: The Necessity of Art.*

especially of clerical readers, the class of people who desire ritual and millinery in Church services, he makes an effective appeal. I regard this desire for mediæval externals of worship as a thing in itself indifferent. If it helps some Churchmen and Churchwomen to a stronger sense of Christian belief, so be it. That a good deal of ritual is not inconsistent with evangelical religion is proved by the evidence of the Churches of Scandinavia. In Sweden and Denmark mediæval customs of ritual are to a great extent retained, but the religious atmosphere is not only evangelical but evangelical of a broad type: views which in England would be considered modernist are prevalent even among bishops. It is also suggestive that while the episcopal order in Sweden claims with justice that it preserves an uninterrupted succession from the Middle Ages, the same order in Denmark acknowledges a break at the time of the Reformation. Yet the two Churches work together in perfect harmony; and the question of apostolic succession is not one to which they attach much importance.[1]

I do not believe that Dr. Dearmer's way of looking at the externals of worship will commend itself to English Christians generally. It may be regarded as parallel to the love of smart clothing and the pursuit of fashion in

[1] I make this statement on the authority of a Danish bishop.

ordinary life. It is far more attractive to women and feminine-minded clerics than to men. And there is much truth in the view of Amiel that a State, a Society or a Church which effeminizes itself is on the way to degeneracy and decay. Even in the Middle Ages, though splendid ceremonies and spectacles were provided by the hierarchy to attract the people in the street, the life-blood of the Church poured in other directions, towards the life of austerities in the cloister and careful thinking in the Universities. And at present, however it may be with the Latin races, the Teutonic peoples have long ago made up their minds as to the indifferent character of mere outward show and ceremony.

It is probable that the growth of democracy has increased among us the power and influence of the strata of society which have never much advanced beyond the intellectual condition of the Middle Ages. The mere outward conveniences of modern life prove nothing as to intellectual and spiritual growth and depth. The English people is not, and never has been, wholly Teutonic. There is a strong substratum of the race which is called Celtic, but is really mostly pre-Celtic, descended from the cave-man and the man of the age of stone.[1] With democracy this stratum tends to become predominant. And one may well believe that it

[1] This was the view of Professor Rhys, a great Celtic scholar, and a loyal Welshman.

retains, partly in its conscious feeling, and still more in the unconscious element of the spirit, the same love of show and glitter which it had in past ages. Any careful observer must see that beneath the outward comfort and pleasures of society there is, especially since the Great War, a retrogression towards barbarism. There is often no quiet for reflection, no care for the reasonable, only a love for rushing about and following a course of giddy amusement. This being so, no doubt it is natural that outward show, ceremonies and millinery should prove more attractive to many than the quiet and reflective religion which in pre-Reformation times marked the spiritual leaders of the Church; and in the subsequent age was widely spread through the nation. So Dr. Dearmer may from the psychological point of view have some justification. But after all, in England, Germany, Scandinavia, Scotland, and the United States, spiritual religion is still a great reality, and dominates largely the lives of the more steady and serious men and women. Nor is it by any means confined to the more leisured classes. Many a peasant in the Northern countries has reached by means of it a high degree of both spirituality and morality. It is unnecessary to quote instances, which will be found by hundreds in the biographical literature of the last four centuries. The popularity of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the enormous

success of the movement which started with Whitefield and Wesley, are too familiar to need more than a mention. To the great majority of English Christians this kind of popular religion seems on a higher plane than the religion of the peasantry of France or Italy or Ireland; and attempts to substitute in our country a religion of ritual, display and miracle for a religion of the conscience and the spirit will seem merely retrogressive.

At the same time it must be confessed that the indifference to art which is widespread among Teutonic peoples is not in itself a merit but a defect. Every nation has the defects of its qualities. All through history, it is by no means always the races which are intellectual and ethical which have been most successful in art, which belongs naturally more to the emotional than to the practical and ethical side of human nature.

It may be said that the ritualist art which commends itself to Dr. Dearmer is, after all, a parallel development to the English pre-Raphaelite art which had real religious importance, and which even now has more religious influence than that of any other school. Both are indeed products of the Oxford catholicizing movement of the last century. But the broad and vital difference between the two is that whereas the ritualist art is only a fanciful reversion to the past, pre-Raphaelite art aims at being, and is,

in fact, essentially modern. It has an intense love and appreciation of nature and history, and is made living by that love. That it went back for a starting-point to the art of the fifteenth century is true : but it soon broke away in a modern direction, except in the case of Rossetti, who was fundamentally Italian, and never became really acclimatized in England.

II

I will venture to cite a historic parallel which seems to me very enlightening, though it may not impress those less familiar with ancient art. When the Aryan race, especially the Dorians, conquered Greece at the time of the fall of the Mycenæan civilization, they remained for a time far inferior in art-production to the natives of the Mediterranean race whom they supplanted. This is clearly shown by the antiquities found in their tombs. But by the sixth century B.C. a new and progressive art had arisen, which combined the skill in craft and the naturalistic tendencies of the original habitants with the love of balance and order and the steadily progressive character of the true Hellenes. The result was the founding of the lofty and ideal art of the fifth century B.C. I will not carry further theories of race, which are apt to be delusive, and when a race is so thoroughly mixed as is that of England, it is almost impossible to say of one man that he

is mainly Teutonic and of another that he is mainly "Celtic." But in our country the characters of the order-loving Teuton, and the impulsive and passionate "Celt" are very evident. In some districts such as Wales and Cornwall the "Celtic" strain is predominant. In other districts, especially East Anglia, the Teutonic strain is but little diluted. The mixture of the strains has produced in some phases of the national activity remarkable and even splendid results, in civil liberty, in ethical fervour, in philanthropic work. But the only art in which it has been greatly successful is the art of poetry and the drama, in which England has excelled the rest of the world. In the plastic arts it has not yet produced a great national school, apart from landscape-painting. We might regard the art of Sir Joshua Reynolds as typical of the Teutonic tendency; the art of Blake as exhibiting in excess the "Celtic" tendency. The question is whether a really national art, combining the best elements in both strains, is possible in the future.

CHAPTER XIV

ART IN THE ENGLISH CHURCH

I

THUS far I have been considering principles, the natural relations between Christian belief and the imitative arts. I must now try to apply the results at which we have arrived to more practical purposes. In all ages art has centred in the temple and the tomb ; the places where God in various ways is worshipped, and the resting-places of the dead, in whose complete separation from the living no race of men has altogether believed. At the present time, when war-memorials have been set up in profusion on every side, a great many of them in churches, the question of art in our churches has become a burning one. Every day sees some attempted solution of the question, though often those who take practical measures have no conscious knowledge of the real bearing of their acts. The English people have never been great at formulating principles ; they have always moved rather by instinct than by reason ; they have acted first and sought for a reasonable

justification of the action afterwards. But at present the want of principles in church adornment may be a serious mischief. We run great risks of filling our churches with works of the most heterogeneous and discordant character, and producing a confusion which it may hereafter be very difficult to remedy.

I cannot of course hope, in a little treatise like the present, clearly to outline a Christian art which belongs to the present and the future. I can but make suggestions. But I must endeavour briefly to apply to the visible surroundings of our church life the principles which I have tried in previous chapters to develop.

As regards architecture we are on safe ground. English Christianity, so far as it is not Puritan and averse to any kind of art, will be fairly unanimous in preferring the Gothic style. This style belongs essentially to the Teutonic and Celtic races of the west and north of Europe. By them it was invented to suit their religious tendencies. In Italy, except in the Lombard north, it has never gained much footing. The papal religion which centred in Rome was never at home with it. In Rome itself architecture passed through different phases — Roman, Byzantine, Renaissance ; but the mystical and irregular character of Gothic architecture made it ill-suited to the genius of Rome ; and when Rome was the religious ruler of Europe, the great churches of the North were regarded by

the Papal Curia as semi-barbarous. The revived Catholicism of the Council of Trent, which belonged almost exclusively to the Latin races, brought to an end Gothic tendencies in countries which adhered to the Roman obedience, as Puritanism brought them to an end in the countries which accepted the Reformation. The Gothic revival, which powerfully affected England in the last century, had no parallel in Italy.

And our Gothic revival, though, like all great movements, it produced a reaction, was a real stirring of heart and imagination. Its force is by no means spent. It was related to the romantic tendency in literature, and to the reaction against Puritanism and Rationalism in the religious part of the nation. When Anglican churches are built now, some form of Gothic architecture is usually chosen. But when an important church is erected by Roman Catholics, often, as in the case of the new cathedral at Westminster, some Roman type is chosen. By such choice the Roman Catholics show that they do not represent any genuinely English feeling. In recent years the number of men who take an intelligent interest in our great cathedrals and abbeys has enormously increased. The camera is in daily use in the hands of amateurs who study such buildings, sometimes in great detail and with much knowledge.

There can be no doubt that although the Gothic style in England was developed by ecclesiastics steeped in mediæval Catholicism, many of them natives of other countries, yet the style is not at all inharmonious with modern Anglicanism, not only the Anglicanism of the high-church party, but that of the moderates. The noble and simple forms of our cathedrals were originally associated with picturesque ceremony, with materialist religious beliefs, and extreme sacramental teaching. But the loss of these associations does not destroy the beauty or the appropriateness of the buildings themselves. English travellers, who cannot repress a feeling of revolt when they witness the tawdry decorations, the posturing and the millinery of the high services in Italian cathedrals, experience no vestige of this feeling in attending an ordinary service in an English Gothic church. Such a church is the home of the soul of a people ; and even a Baptist or a Quaker may find his religious sense quickened by a visit to it.

To copy in a slavish and literal fashion a particular work of Gothic architecture is doubtless objectionable. No one loves a counterfeit. But it should be added that while the designs of old Gothic churches show fine imagination and artistic talent, the crowd of masons who carried out the details can seldom have been men of artistic taste and capacity ; and fresh

copies of decorative capitals or tracery need not be much more mechanical and according to rule than they were originally. It is not at all like a copy of a statue or a painting. But the right plan would seem to be that advocated by Ruskin, to choose a somewhat simple style in architecture, and to allow the masons much liberty in carrying out their own ideas in details of decoration, especially impressing upon them that if they adhere to natural forms of vegetable and animal life they cannot go far wrong. A thing to be avoided most is any mere mechanical and soulless repetition. In the decorative work of the Natural History Museum at Oxford there is a great deal of work which was not only carried out, but even designed, by the masons employed, and although it may sometimes be rather naïve and show imperfect art training, it is very different from mere mechanical repetition.

When we pass from architecture to sculpture and painting, the matter is more difficult and doubtful. I will revert to the analysis which I made in the chapters dealing with the history of Christian art. I there showed that there are three ways in which the graphic arts can serve Christianity, and in fact, have served it in the past: (1) By representing as detached and substantive figures, whether in sculpture or painting, the Founders and the Saints of Christianity. (2) By embodying in painting or sculptural relief the deeds and triumphs of those

Founders and Saints. (3) By directly setting forth doctrines or impulses of the faith in art-representations which appeal rather to feeling and to imagination than to intelligence.

In representations of the Founder, or of the Founder as an infant in the arms of His Mother, there are two things to avoid, two rocks between which we should steer our course. On the one side is mere convention, the adherence to types of the early Church. Such types no doubt may satisfy those of strongly conservative temperament; but they cannot in the nature of things be vital or satisfy an art which aims at the ideal. On the other side is naturalism. To represent literally the Founder of Christianity in the guise of a Jewish youth such as one meets in the streets of Jerusalem or London, or his Mother by the figure of a peasant girl, literally copied from some model in Syria or Italy, is profoundly unsatisfactory. It is making more of the husk than of the kernel, of earthly literalness than of heavenly idealism. Such representations cannot in any way help worship. We might tolerate them in a private picture-gallery, but to churches they are utterly unsuited. Rather than have such figures in places of worship, it would be far better to do as did the iconoclasts of Byzantium, and prohibit altogether the representation of Christ. In modern times many artists, great and small, have tried to represent the ideal Christ in human form. How far some have

succeeded is a question. But the two most important phases of the life of the Founder, His death on the cross and His exaltation at the right hand of God, can scarcely be satisfactorily represented. A crucifix must be either repulsive from the point of view of art, or inadequate from the point of view of religion.

On the other hand, narrative scenes representing the teaching and parables of the Gospels or the deeds of the Apostles as recorded in Acts are quite legitimate and may well be successful. Here, I think, is an open door. The alternatives, convention and naturalism, are not presented with the same rigidity, and between the two lies a great field of possibilities in which artists are left free to make experiments, and to develop a fresh art. And in fact, in recent times such experiments have constantly been made with more or less success, as we have seen in previous chapters.

As to representations which savour of mysticism, I have spoken in a previous chapter. If such representations can be successful and appropriate, it is clear that their most suitable place would be in churches. But, unless they were works of rare talent, one can scarcely suppose that the worshippers would not become tired of them. They have to be regarded with a certain enthusiasm of sympathy, and to this a modern critical congregation can scarcely rise, and certainly it cannot long remain at

such a level. One therefore suspects that at present their most suitable place would be, not ordinary churches, but special chapels, set aside for the few.

II

Sculpture is scarcely an art in which the minds and feelings of modern Englishmen express themselves. Nor do they usually look at works of sculpture with sympathy or emotion. Hence in church-sculpture a good deal of convention, of adherence to traditional types of saint and divine is tolerable. What would be much more objectionable would be the introduction of anything crude or extravagant, which might seem to those who came to the church absurd or vulgar. As a satisfactory example of the renewal of the figures in a reredos, generally speaking, one might cite New College, Oxford. As an unsatisfactory example of the insertion of figures on an exterior, Beverley Minster may be mentioned, where many of the new statues are quite unworthy of their place. However, to cite good and bad examples without explanation or detailed criticism is not helpful.

A great number of sculptured reredoses and tombs have in recent years been set up in churches, some good, some bad, some indifferent. The greatest danger at the moment is that donors and church authorities should be led away by the talk of supposed authorities on

art to introduce into these compositions the subversive and utterly unsuited fancies of schools of art which profess to be modern and progressive. In several public places such works of ephemeral notoriety and radical unworthiness have of late found a place; and there is always a fear that the love of novelty may introduce them into churches, whence it may become in future, when taste is more settled, difficult to eject them.

In regard to works of sculpture and painting, it is a great pity that there is not in every diocese, as there is in some, a special committee, charged with the duty of examining all works proposed for setting up in churches, with a power of excluding those which are unsatisfactory. Bishops and Deans are by no means always good critics in matters of art, and this is truer still of the well-to-do people who want to set up monuments or to dedicate windows. On such committees there should sit both experienced judges of church-art and practical artists. In this way at all events the most objectionable works would be weeded out.

In several of our cathedrals the visitor is shocked by the great size and prominence of the tombs of modern Bishops and Deans, or even lesser functionaries such as organists. It is natural that the friends of notable Churchmen should be anxious, after their death, to put up some memorial of them in the scene of their

labours. But this desire needs limiting and curbing. The available space in a church is but small; and each succeeding generation has but the right to occupy a small part of it. Splendid monuments should be reserved for the very few; and magnificence in tombs is quite as foreign to the ideal of a Bishop as is magnificence in private life.

Some thirty years ago, when it became necessary to renew some of the decayed statues on the spire of St. Mary's at Oxford, an interesting controversy arose. Some graduates wished as closely as possible to imitate the figures which had perished, some wished to give the sculptor, Mr. Frampton, more freedom to devise such types as he thought suitable. The matter ended in a compromise. In such a setting, any really modern elements would have been incongruous: but on the other hand a mere slavish production of brand-new editions of ancient figures would have been equally to be deplored. A compromise was the only practicable course.

Considering the low level at which both the practice and the appreciation of sculpture stand among us, it is not unnatural that most men of taste, when they set up a memorial to deceased friends, play, so to speak, for safety. They avoid any attempt at poetry or originality, any allegorical figures, and fall back on careful lettering, combined perhaps with portraiture. It is a confession of failure, but it avoids the

risk of incongruity. And I think that those who have examined the late exhibition of designs for war-memorials in the South Kensington Museum will not be encouraged to go beyond the line of safety. It is a pity ; for the present ought to be an occasion for sculptors to make a strong effort to revive their art as an expression of poetry, of religion and of life. And no doubt there are at present sculptors who have ambition and ideality. It is the want of homogeneous feeling in the public and of accepted principles in art which paralyses them.

And there is among us a school of sculptors, especially represented by Epstein, which is in revolt not only against convention in their art, but against the fundamental laws of it. The relief by Epstein in Hyde Park seems to me an outrage against taste, and one is glad to learn that it is so regarded by the great majority of the people in London. If works of this kind were set up in our churches, it would be a calamity. It would show a definite tendency away from art in the direction of ugliness and disorder, and away from Christianity in the direction of barbarism.

III

There is much actuality attaching to the question of coloured windows. I think that few of us will hear of modern windows without a sinking at heart : we have seen so many that

are poor and bad ; so few that are really good. Here and there we may find a window by Holiday or Burne-Jones or Tiffany which reaches a high standard ; but they are few among many. And the worst is that a coloured window, so to speak, advertises itself. There is no escaping it. It stands between the spectator and the light ; and, good or bad, he has to take note of it. Coloured windows are usually put up in memory of some friend : and as they are set up usually by people of little historic training or taste, and without due reference to their surroundings, our churches are being rapidly vulgarized and barbarized.

No doubt the colouring of windows was an important feature in the great mediæval churches. It harmonized with the architecture and the sculpture, making a homogeneous and magnificent whole. But whereas Gothic architecture is a thing to which we still look up with reverence and almost with awe, the painting of the time was at a far lower level in comparison with that of more modern times. I have already observed (Chap. IX) that even in their own day the windows of Chartres offended the stricter religious orders as appealing to the senses rather than to the spirit.

The making of coloured windows in our day cannot escape the horns of a dilemma. Either it is a mere imitation of old glass, with all its defects and conventions, in which case it is still-

born ; or it approaches modern painting in freedom, when it is at once felt to be incongruous and unsuitable to the Gothic surroundings.

Some people may be anxious to keep at all events the colouring of stained glass, to have in the churches a " dim religious light," as a natural aid to devotion. But this feature might be secured, as it often was in the early days of stained glass, by merely using good patterns of rich colour. It is indeed, in all early glass, rather the masses of colour than the designs which are prominent. The use in our day of mere patterns and colour schemes would avoid the almost insuperable difficulties which attach to the production of scenes in stained glass.

To illustrate these difficulties, let me take a few examples from Oxford. I shall criticize, not from the technical, but from the religious point of view.

The most popular, and I venture to say the most pleasing, painted windows in Oxford are those of Sir Joshua Reynolds in New College Chapel. They represent, as those who have seen them are likely to remember, the Christian virtues, Faith, Hope, Charity, Temperance and Fortitude, embodied in the persons of beautiful female figures. Above is a much less attractive representation of the Nativity. Critics point out that the figures sin against every rule of the craft ; that in fact they are not stained glass but paintings on glass ; and one sees the

extreme feebleness of the painted architectural settings of the figures. But undeniably the paintings have, what far outweighs all proprieties, real charm; and one goes to them again and again. I think, however, that scarcely anyone would wish to have fresh windows painted by modern painters on the same principles, for these windows are merely paintings out of place. But their charm arises because they are thoroughly modern and appeal to the natural emotions of all who love the chaste and serious beauty of the best of English women. We see in our daily lives the faith, hope and charity which such women display; and we feel that these sweetest of Christian graces are aptly embodied in the types of the painter.

Very successful on the whole is the great series of saints and teachers of the Church set up in the windows of Mansfield College. The subjects were selected with good judgment by the late Dr. Fairbairn; they comprise personages from the time of the Apostles to our own day, and each is in the actual dress of his time, which Dr. Fairbairn took great pains to ascertain. They are not a vapid series of conventionalities, but good representations of the men and women as they were. On this point Dr. Fairbairn took much trouble, investigating documents, and using the materials in our museums, and the artist was most willing to

accept all archæological help. The result is a biographical history of Christianity. It is strange that it should be left to a broad-minded and thoroughly historical Nonconformist to carry out an idea which properly belongs to the Church as a continuous inspired institution. Of course the selection has its weak side. Perhaps excessive emphasis is laid on the great teachers of the Reformation, and the inclusion of preachers of our own day, such as R. W. Dale and Henry Ward Beecher, may seem incongruous. But if the same ideas were carried out in a more catholic and conservative spirit, the result might be a real help to devotion and to conduct.

It is very difficult to be really successful in windows, as one must choose between convention and unsuitability. And even if one could find a golden mean between these extremes, the whole idea of coloured windows seems to a modern mind unsatisfactory. Windows were made to let in the light ; and we love the light more and more. Compare in size the windows of a modern house with those of one of a century ago ! Why make a way for the light and then block it out, so that people are compelled to see it through a glass, darkly. Let us have light in our churches, and then we can more hopefully set about beautifying their interiors, and making them worthy.

As a matter of fact, painted windows are an

innovation in the Christian churches. They only came in, in England at all events, in the twelfth century. But long before that, from the days when the Christians of Rome held their services in the Catacombs, it had been a custom to represent in painting or mosaic-work on the walls of the meeting-places, scenes from the Old and the New Testaments, symbolical representations of Christian belief and the like. This took place before any representations of Christ or the Apostles in sculpture were known among Christians. And the custom of painting frescoes on the walls of churches prevailed until the Reformation. In England nearly all painting was destroyed or perished of neglect in the age of Puritanism, though in recent years painting has sometimes been brought to light by removing whitewash.

I venture to make a somewhat revolutionary suggestion. I think that the best place for painting in church is not the windows, but the walls. Why should we not once more cover the blank spaces of the walls with frescoes ? In that way we might escape many difficulties. In fresco painting we could use the methods, the perspective, the light and shade of contemporary easel pictures, though of course with a spice of religious conservatism. We could depict series of Christian heroes and teachers, free from the domination of convention, or scenes from the triumphs of Christianity all

through the ages. The pictures should not be so vivid as to compel attention; they should be made gentle and quiet, so that we might not become tired of them.

It would be a great gain from the artistic point of view. And no less would be the gain from the religious point of view. A mediæval church with its multitudinous painted and sculptured scenes was, as Ruskin has put it, the Bible of the poor. At present the ignorance of Christian history among the mass of the people is terrible. And we may fear that it is still growing. If the mere memory were reinforced by the sight of the eyes, the history of the Christian Church might become familiar to all church-goers, and make them feel that we all are links in a long chain, in the transition from one phase of Christianity to another.

In the choice and the arrangement of such scenes, there would be scope alike for artistic feeling and for religious fervour. In the great series of mosaics in some of the churches of the Middle Ages the history of the Christian religion, as given in the Old and the New Testaments, was portrayed stage by stage. We need modern embodiments of the same idea; but naturally we should dwell far less on the legendary history set forth in the Jewish Scriptures. Our view of the Old Testament is widely different from the stiff and unhistoric view of the mediæval artist. Rather, with scenes from the

Gospels and the Acts we should combine representations of the great deeds in Church history, the preaching of the Apostles, the bringing of Christianity to the heathen of Northern Europe, the setting out of the Friars. In the new Roman Catholic Cathedral at Cambridge the stained windows represent the sufferings of Roman priests and confessors in the sixteenth century. Has the English Church no scenes to record, at least as worthy ?

It will be objected that in the present divided state of Christendom, events in the history of the Church will be regarded in too controversial a light to be the subjects of an art which can make a broad appeal to the general feeling. Unhappily there is some truth in this objection. Especially the two strongly contrasted schools of the Catholics and the Protestants will regard with very different eyes not merely the events of the times of the Reformation, but many other events in Christian history : so that the appeal of a painting which may in one spectator arouse pleasure and enthusiasm may in another arouse only dislike and hostility. But though we cannot wholly avoid this difficulty, we may well find a wide field as to which the different parties of Christendom may be agreed. The early preaching of the faith, the conversion of the barbarians of the North, the triumphs of Christian zeal over cruelty and barbarism, whether in Europe or in the modern mission

field, are the same for both those with Catholic and those with Protestant leanings. And such subjects come infinitely nearer to the life and the faith of Christians in general than the scenes from Jewish history which mediæval artists were fond of depicting.

But the Modern Churchman will not stop at that point, or be content with the somewhat colourless depiction of what we all agree in admiring. He will realize that from the very beginning of Christianity there have been in it various strains, none of which could have been omitted without injury to the whole. From the first there have been ascetics and humanists, thinkers and preachers, men of traditional and men of liberal tendencies. There have always been in the Church men of broader and men of narrower theology, those who longed for a more exclusive, and those who sought for a wider interpretation of the faith. All these have contributed, each in his own way, to the life of the Church. The dominant party in the visible Church has always been ready to un-church those who did not agree with its pronouncements and repeat its shibboleths. But in the broad light of history we see how often the victorious majority has in the end accepted, in part at least, the teaching of the oppressed minority. And we see how an over-development of one side of Christianity has usually provoked a reaction in the opposite direction.

From the broad church point of view the heretic Origen has contributed almost as much to the development of Christianity as the orthodox Athanasius ; rulers like Alfred and Charles the Great have done as much for the Church as Gregory and Ambrose ; the missionaries of the North who were slain were none the less Christian martyrs because they were Arians. We have to cast aside the cant of orthodoxy, as much as other cant, if we want to see things as they really were. In this way a wide window is opened on to Christian history, and a wide field laid out for the work of Christian artists. No doubt High Church and Low Church would make a different selection of subjects and treatment.

I have already observed that it is to fresco painting that the modern schools of art which have tried to be definitely Christian have turned. It was so with the German Nazarenes, who have left in Rome and in Germany great series of paintings in fresco. The activity of our own pre-Raphaelites began with fresco painting of scenes from the Arthurian romances. But they failed to find a field for series of religious scenes in churches, and fell back on stained glass ; in my opinion a great misfortune.

One can cite as precedents several recent series of paintings of a secular character, which are satisfactory. On the walls of the Fine Arts Museum at Boston are scenes by the French

painter Puvis de Chavannes, which represent in very simple and ideal form various stages in the early history of civilization. In the Old Pinakothek of Munich is an arcade in twenty-five sections, on the walls of which are frescoes by Cornelius, representing some of the important events of German history, and illustrating the rise and progress of painting in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. And on the walls of our Houses of Parliament are a remarkable series of frescoes, depicting in idealized form the great events of English history from British times onwards. Many other examples might be cited, of various degrees of merit, embodying similar ideas. Surely this notion is worth baptizing into Christ.

Something of course must depend on the architectural style of the churches to be decorated. A church of Norman, Early English, or Italian style offers considerable spaces of blank wall; while in churches of Decorated or Perpendicular style the windows are larger and stone piers break up the wall spaces. In such buildings there is more abundant light and painted windows are less inappropriate. But if we consider how often almost every person of any taste is offended and distressed by the stained windows of the last century, we may well be anxious to escape from a custom which is in itself open to objection, and which causes far more pain than pleasure to many church-people.

It may seem to readers that a suggestion as to painting the walls of churches is a small practical outcome of our investigations. But it must be observed that our inquiry is as to principles, rather than as to the practice of art. All over the country there are at present schools of art in which students are being trained, and studios in which they practise. All that I can hope to do is to urge students and teachers, so far as they are Christian, to cherish in their hearts the most beautiful of the works of nature and of art, and to infuse into their work the great principles of Christianity, the love of the ideal, discontent with merely sensuous gratification, a belief in the higher powers and destiny of man. It is for practical artists to decide how best this may be done.

CHAPTER XV

MODERNISM IN RELIGION AND ART

I

THERE has been a fine saying in the Christian Church in regard to those who speak of God: *Ama et dic quod vis.* If one loves God, one is not likely to speak about him badly. In the same way, M. Maritain has said, "Be a Christian and cultivate art, and your art will be Christian." But of course the cultivation implies historic and artistic training, and so we come back to the psychologic and historic point of view. The saying does not mean that any good Christian is a good judge of art, or able to produce a good work of religious art. It only means that if his spirit is full of the two enthusiasms of Christianity and of love of beauty, the two will tend to coalesce, or at all events to be on terms one with the other.

But first it is necessary to make clear a distinction of great importance. It may not unnaturally be supposed that there is a connection between Modernism in religion, which has become conspicuous in England of late, and

Modernism in art, which would include the various schools of art which have rapidly succeeded one another in France, and in a less conspicuous way in England, since Cézanne. Names such as Van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse and Picasso figure largely in books dealing with the most modern art: and the works of these painters have become conspicuous in exhibitions, and have sold at high prices to collectors. In so far as these artists have tried to introduce new methods into art-representation, mainly on scientific grounds, they are of course outside the scope of the present work, which does not concern itself with matters of technique. But their main ideas and purposes have to be considered.

As regards these schools, I generally agree with the views admirably expressed by Mr. Charles Marriott.[1] He shows how French Impressionism arose as a form of naturalist art out of study not so much of natural forms as of the effects of light and shade and reflections, when one works in the open air. The Post-Impressionists show in various ways a revolt against mere naturalism, emphasizing rather the human element in observation. The contest between Impressionists and Post-Impressionists is in fact a special form of the eternal conflict between the valuing of the given in nature and the valuing of that which man con-

[1] *Modern Movements in Painting*, 1920.

tributes to nature from his own faculties. In neither school does the ideal element figure largely.

Ideas and purposes should always have some relation to religion, if religion be taken in the widest sense. But, speaking with all diffidence, and with a very moderate knowledge of modern French painting, I should say that it has no relation to Christianity, nor even to theism. It is an art of revolt against religion. A feature in all these schools is their reversion to non-Christian and non-European types. Gauguin took as his instructors Polynesian types, and reverted on his own confession to barbarism. Picasso copied negroid types. With the revolt against what they considered academic art, went revolt against all the results of many centuries of Christian life. And some of them in their revolt went on to insanity and to suicide.

M. Maritain,[1] however, is not wholly without sympathy for these artists, because he discerns in them certain features which remind him of the art of the Christian primitives.

" But these analogies," he adds, " are merely material, the inner principle is quite different. What most modern artists seek in the cold darkness of a calculated anarchy, the primitives possessed, without seeking for it, in the peace of the inward order. But if we changed the spirit, the inward impulse, and substituted the light of faith and

[1] *Art et Scolastique*, p. 176.

reason for the exasperation of the senses, we should be face to face with an art capable of high spiritual developments. From that point of view, though in other ways contemporary art is at the antipodes to Christianity, nevertheless it is much nearer to a Christian art than are the academic schools."

An equally severe judgment on mere "art for art's sake" is passed by a writer of a very different school, M. Baudelaire.

"An unbounded love of mere form drives artists to strange and monstrous aberrations. Those absorbed in a wild passion for the beautiful, the amusing, the taking, the picturesque, lose the notions of justice and truth. The frenetic passion for art (as art) is a cancer which devours the rest; and as the complete absence of the just and the true in art means really the absence of art itself, the whole man disappears; the excessive indulgence of one faculty ends in the void."

The prophet of Christian art in England is of course John Ruskin. He combined love of religion and love of art in an unexampled degree. His powerful mind was extremely analytical and critical; his knowledge of art in certain fields was intimate; and he had a marvellous power of persuasive eloquence. Some of his best work, such as the Edinburgh lectures, is masterly; and scattered through his extensive writings is a wealth of observations and principles of very great value. But unfortunately his eloquence proved his bane. A fatal facility in writing carried him away. It is impossible to extract from his writings any consistent and logical scheme of æsthetic. He shows better

in extracts than in treatises. His friend Mr. Collingwood [1] has tried to reduce to order and system the teachings scattered through his books; and he has succeeded as well as could be hoped. But the task is like that of Solomon when he shut up a powerful genie in a bottle or a ring. Ruskin cannot be reduced to order. So he could found no school, nor could anyone, strictly speaking, be a follower of his, though many, accepting this or that saying of his, have imagined that they had caught his spirit.

Just now the influence of Ruskin is suffering an eclipse. Such an eclipse is quite usual in the reputations of great men during the half-century after their death. But if they be really great, there will come sooner or later a reaction, and the world will discriminate between their utterances, largely dominated by the circumstances of the time, and the message which they really had for mankind. The recent revival of the reputation of Dickens, Trollope and other admirable writers of the Victorian age furnishes good examples of the process.

Is it likely, or is it even possible, that there should arise a school of Christian art, which should be able to combine in its work the essential inspiration both of Hellas and of Judaea, which should satisfy at once the love of beauty

[1] *The Art Teaching of John Ruskin.* By W. G. Collingwood. 1891. Compare Findberg's *Ruskin's Modern Painters.*

which was the mainspring of Greek art and the love of God which was the innermost teaching of Judaism and Christianity ? If such a school can arise, and can appeal to a wide audience, I can scarcely imagine it arising except among French or English Modernists. It would find itself in opposition, as the Modernists are, alike to Mediævalism and Puritanism, though anxious to preserve and cherish all that is really good and of permanent value in both. It would be dissatisfied with Mediævalism, because Christianity in the Middle Ages is out of harmony with modern ideals and modern conditions. It would be opposed to Puritanism, because Puritanism rejects the pursuit of ideal beauty, without which art has no meaning. But it would delight in the self-devotion, the spiritual aspirations, of the saints of the Church ; and a code of ethics as severe as that of the Puritans, but not so narrow, would be necessary to keep it from the evil of the world. But schools of art arise, not out of criticism, but out of an impulse spreading from God to men, and we have to wait and hope for the breath which may make dry bones live.

That any religious art would appeal to the crowd in England at present is scarcely to be hoped. The English people are not naturally appreciative of art ; and the effects of the Puritan iconoclasm of the sixteenth century still prevail among us. Of late, matters have

by no means improved, inasmuch as organized labour and its leaders care little for religion and still less for art. Their ideal is material prosperity, which ideal they have merely adopted from the more leisured classes. But there is always a saving remnant in the nation, scattered through all classes and confined to none. It is for that that we work, and in it is the only hope for the future.

The Archbishops' Reporters have, it seems, no suggestions to make. They leave the matter as it stands. But it is impossible, if one has affection at once for the Church and for art, not to make some endeavour to introduce the two strangers to one another; or at least to try to discover the grounds of their divergence. This can only be done by investigation, both from the historic and the psychologic point of view. It is a difficult task; but a worthy one.

II

The quality which beyond all others characterizes the Church Modernists is love of truth, truth to visible nature, truth in history, truth to the spiritual nature of man. Mere convention, affectation, pretence are the things to which it is most bitterly opposed.

It is really a parallel to this striving which we find in the rise of all the nobler schools of art in the past. They became convinced that

the practise of art had sunk into convention and lethargy; that it was little better than a survival; and they have appealed with enthusiasm and confidence to nature, and to humanity.

Such must in our days be the spirit which will revive alike Christianity and art, and produce a modern Christian art.

In the past when art has shaken off the trammels of Rome, and moved towards a freer life, it has always moved in the direction of truth, the lesser truth which may be observed in nature by the senses; the greater truth which can be discovered by the spirit.

The Dutch schools have been pre-eminent in the rendering of the truth of visible nature. Portrait painting, which is essentially the most naturalist branch of art, since people want a likeness, has greatly flourished in England, Holland and other Protestant countries. Landscape-painting also has been eminently successful in Protestant lands.

But even in the branches of art which are most essentially naturalist, portrait painting and landscape-painting, a merely imitative rendering is not really satisfying. It soon palls upon us. As merely naturalist tales and novels soon become wearisome, so do paintings which are merely imitative. And photography has come in to make this clear, since the sun is a far more exact artist in all outline and detail than any painter. At present photography does not

satisfactorily represent colour, but it is making rapid strides in that direction, and must become even in this matter more effective. So we are obliged to turn from a merely materialist truth to the higher kinds of truth, truth to human nature, and the divine truth of religion.

Portrait painting may show us, more clearly perhaps than any other kind of work, the three stages of truth. A merely literal rendering of the outward forms of a face, if exact, will greatly impress the man in the street. This is the kind of rendering which we have in sculptured portraits of the earlier Roman age. And even in our own day some portrait painters have attained fame by such prosaic renderings, notably, as it seems to me, Mr. Sargent, who somehow takes all spirit and all ideality out of his portraits. It is possible to imitate the human face in the same way as we should imitate a dead fowl or a flower. But this is to take a low level in art.

Far more interesting are what I have called characteristic portraits, which by slightly exaggerating some features of a face, and slightly minimizing others, give an air of life and character to it. Carried too far such a proceeding would lead to caricature : but kept well within bounds, it is most successful. Such seem to me the portraits of Millais.

But the third and highest kind of portrait painting, which is infused with the spirit of

religion, represents not merely what men or women are, but what they might be; tries to represent not only the fleshly visible frame, but the ideal laid up in heaven. For the accidents of life, such as the exact age, or the precise colour of eyes or hair, it cares less than for the presentment of a spirit, which lives in space and time, but is not dominated by them, which has a past and future as well as a present; and in which the deeply seated qualities, which mark race and ancestry, are more prominent than those which are merely transient. Such an artist will bring out the infinitely small traces which must needs be made in features and expression by every noble resolve or strong purpose, as well, alas, as by every slip into evil or by indulgence of unbridled appetite. Naturally artists of this kind must always be rare, except in the pages of novels.

In the writings of art-critics infinite confusion has arisen through not distinguishing the kinds of truth, naturalist truth, characteristic truth, and ideal truth. Ruskin in particular has failed in this way. When he says that all art aims at truth, and is justified only by truth, he is quite right: but the absence of clear notions of the meaning of the phrase has led him into endless confusion. He is always struggling with the subject, and during the earlier part of his life makes progress towards clearer thought: but it is not an uniform

progress: and naturally the struggle leads to want of consistency.

Religion, and more especially the Christian religion, cares mainly for the higher truth, for the embodiment of the divine ideas in the forms of space of time, in the history of the race, and in the coming of the divine kingdom. It regards the world of spirit as the real world, and the face of nature as an appearance only, through which we may gain glances at the world of spirit. Naturalist art is not repugnant to it, since every natural form is of divine origin and ordering: but naturalist art does not satisfy it. Less in agreement with the spirit of Christian art is all false and exaggerated sentiment, all misrepresentation of the facts of the spiritual life.

To art which is professedly and definitely Christian we may apply the great law of Christianity, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." If a figure of a saint who is held to have excelled in some special virtue, wisdom or beneficence or purity, is depicted, whether the saint be a historic or a mythical person does not greatly matter. Still less does archæological accuracy in dress or background matter. What matters is that the virtues should clearly appear. This is the religious interest; and the artistic interest is that the virtues should be exhibited in a pleasing and attractive form. If one of the miracles

recorded in the Gospels is portrayed, it does not greatly matter whether the narrative is accepted as strictly miraculous, or taken as a mere embodiment of parable. When the divine Founder of Christianity is portrayed, whether the suggestion for portraiture be taken from a peasant of Judaea or a saint of Italy, or a rare Englishman, the great point is that the figure should be worthy, and illustrate some aspect of the Saviour, whether in His earthly career or His heavenly exaltation. And since we need a feminine ideal quite as much as a male ideal, the Mother of Jesus may well be for us as for the artists of the Renaissance the type of purity and pity as well as of loveliness. There is a sufficient distance between that and the Mariolatry which has so often been perverted to evil in the Christian Church. But the expression of mere physical beauty and sexual charm in the Madonna is certainly not Christian.

III

There often recurs to our minds the profound saying of Matthew Arnold, that "we stand between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born." Any attempt to revive the painting or sculpture of mediæval Christianity, can lead to nothing but what is lifeless and quite out of harmony with its surroundings. On the other hand, to embody the living spirit of Christianity in new forms of art is an

exceedingly difficult task, a problem as yet unsolved.

There is no hope in backward steps ; the only hope is in an attitude resolutely turned towards the future. Christianity must believe that the Kingdom of God lies before and not behind us. As in religious belief, so in religious art, there are three conditions of the modern world to which it will have to conform. It must be in harmony with the great extension of our intellectual outlook, and the daily progress of the knowledge of the world and man. It must thoroughly appreciate history, and see in it a divinely sanctioned process. And it must also harmonize with the religious needs and faculties of man, be on terms with religious emotion and help the practical work of religion in the world.

It is certain that a great art cannot be created by the talent of individuals. There are in all ages able artists ; but for great art there is necessary not merely talented men but schools or bodies of artists who have tendencies in common and work together to create important monuments. At present the tendency among artists is to be strongly individualist ; to try to express themselves, and to be content with self-expression.

It is also necessary that there should be a certain balance in society, an air free from extremes of heat and cold, and secure from devastating hurricanes of passion. Art is like

a flower which can only attain beauty when the conditions are quiet. This quiet is very different from stagnation: in the great ages of art the course of public events may have been stormy, wars and pestilences may have swept over the country. But there must be a general agreement as to the bases of society and the purpose of life. It is obvious that in the English Church, and in the country generally, there is at present no such agreement, but a welter of all possible views and tendencies. Hence there can be no general feeling as to what art should aim at, and what developments are suited to it. In an atmosphere of complete unsettlement and universal criticism art cannot strike roots into the deep soil of national character or religious belief. Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism, was persuaded that as soon as the positive spirit had conquered Europe a great and new art would arise under its influence; and he was a man of remarkable insight.

But further, a society which is materialized, which thinks of the means of life rather than of life itself, which is quite ready to gain the world by losing its own soul, is not one in which religious art can flourish. Art is a way in which the divine ideas which underlie and mould society express themselves. And those who do not feel the influence of such ideas will only care for a trifling and superficial art. To strive for

a seven hours' day or a minimum wage may be an excellent thing; but it is to concern oneself with means and not with ends; for the great question is whether the work-people who have more leisure and better pay will use them for worthy purposes or waste them to their own deterioration. To be able to travel along roads in a motor at thirty miles an hour certainly enables one to do things which otherwise one could not have accomplished. But if the result is only to obscure things of real moment, to indulge mere restlessness, what is its value?

So a revival of religious art can only come from a general revival of religion. A new school of Christian art can only arise from a deeper sense of Christian faith and ethics. No increase of revenue or reform of organization will beget it. Nor will it be produced by a more rational and scientific interpretation of Christian history and doctrine; they can only modify the expression of art; they cannot give rise to it. It must spring from the heart of the Church, when the outward conditions are favourable. In a time of general unrest and uncertainty, when the Church is "suffering from a vague disease," it is only possible to prescribe palliatives. Either we must go back to the Church art of the fourteenth century, or we must work, with much difficulty and uncertainty, towards an art of the future, as yet indistinctly imagined.

Our hasty survey of modern religious art

brought into prominence the fact that a revival of it was always heralded by a revival of Christian belief. The work of S. Francis and the Friars led up to the rise of the Florentine school of painting, to Giotto and Fra Angelico. The mystical movement in Germany was connected with the school of the German primitives. The Lutheran reformation was related to the school of Holbein Cranach and Dürer, and led on to the Dutch schools of naturalism, and eventually to the landscape painting of Constable and Crome. The Catholic revival which was contemporary, led to the "Jesuit" art of Rubens and Bernini and their contemporaries. And, in more recent times, the pre-Raphaelite school in England was related to the Anglican revival of the middle of the nineteenth century. So the Nazarenes of Germany took their start from the reaction towards Christianity, led by Wackenroder Tieck and the Schlegels; and in Denmark in the present century, the painting of Skavgaard and others accompanied a revival of evangelical religion.

No doubt, many artists would regard the whole argument of this chapter as pedantic and out of date. Perhaps they would even call it mid-Victorian. In their view Christianity is outworn and moribund. And whether it be outworn or not, they would consider that it has nothing to do with modern art. Art, they would hold, must form an alliance with the ideas

of a new age, especially with democracy. But it has yet to be shown that democracy has worthy ideas on the subject of either religion or art. The only ideas which one can call distinctly democratic are the principles of secularity. Secular democracy had its opportunity at the time of the French Revolution: but the only art to which it gave birth was the art of the reactionary age of Napoleon. More recently secularity has achieved a temporary triumph in Russia; it has made desperate war on the existing church; but if we may trust Professor Rostovtzev, one of the best of authorities, it has not shown any sign of giving rise to any new school of art. The Bolsheviks have done nothing, and encouraged nothing, in the way of worthy art-production. In England there are new secularist schools of art, the Futurists and the like; but they do not make the least appeal to the people; they interest only small cliques here and there. In America, which is at present quite as much an oligarchy of wealth as a democracy, some movements parallel to a revival of art have course, such as the provision of parks for the people in all great cities. But, generally speaking, the American towns are even less beautiful than modern towns in England; and the disfigurement of nature by flaring advertisements, one of the surest signs of a want of feeling for beauty, is almost universal.

Therefore, until I am better instructed, I shall hold that as the root principles of Christianity are eternal, and need only to be adapted to the intellectual and social conditions of the new age, so the principles of art as set forth by the great sculptors of Greece, the Gothic architects, the painters of the Renaissance, are good for all time, and need only modification and modernization in order to be a light for the present, as they have been a light in the past.

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